



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

## SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

A SERIES OF PRACTICAL GUIDES  
FOR THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

# SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT IN SPORT



## SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

Sustainability is one of the most pressing challenges of our time across a wide spectrum of social, environmental and economic matters. Major issues such as climate change, economic inequality and social injustice are affecting people throughout the world. These are also pressing concerns for the sport community, both for managing its day-to-day affairs and for its responsibilities towards young people and future generations. We also recognise that sport has unrivalled capacity to motivate and inspire large numbers of people. This is why we believe that the Olympic Movement has both a duty and an opportunity to contribute actively to global sustainability and social justice in line with our vision: "Building a better world through sport".

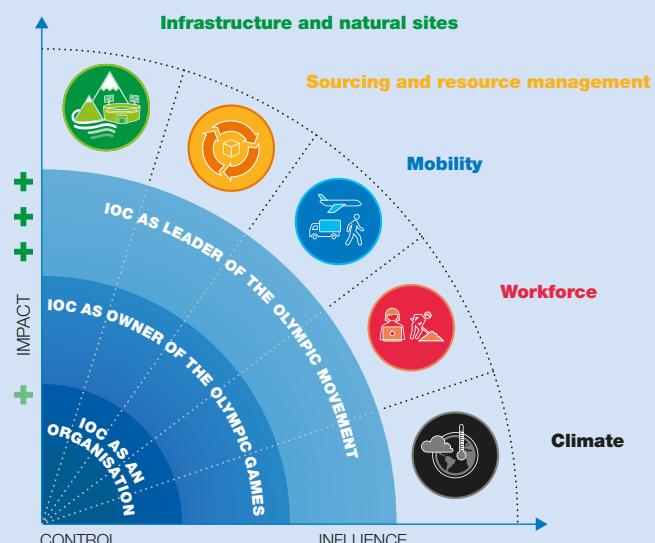
It is therefore logical that sustainability forms one of the key elements of Olympic Agenda 2020, the Olympic Movement's strategic roadmap adopted in December 2014. In particular, this defined our approach to

sustainability across the IOC's three spheres of responsibility:

- **The IOC as an organisation:** To embrace sustainability principles and to include sustainability in its day-to-day operations.
- **The IOC as owner of the Olympic Games:** To take a proactive and leadership role on sustainability and ensure that it is included in all aspects of the planning and staging of the Olympic Games.
- **The IOC as leader of the Olympic Movement:** To engage and assist Olympic Movement stakeholders in integrating sustainability within their own organisations and operations.

Following on from Olympic Agenda 2020, we issued the IOC Sustainability Strategy in December 2016. The Strategy is based on our three spheres of responsibility and five focus areas, as illustrated below.

The IOC Sustainability Strategy framework is illustrated below:





The Strategy sets out a number of actions in our capacity as leader of the Olympic Movement. Among these is a commitment to develop common guidelines, methodologies and tools for National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs). Further information can be found at <https://www.olympic.org/sustainability>.

The “Sustainability Essentials” series of guides is the first concrete outcome of this commitment. These guides aim to provide simple, practical and essential information on key aspects of sustainability for NOCs and IFs to be better able to navigate the complexities of this subject and develop effective sustainability programmes. Whether your organisation is just starting out, or is already actively engaged in sustainability, we hope these guides will provide a valuable overview and reference point for this important topic.

## FEEDBACK

We hope that our “Sustainability Essentials” guides will provide a valuable basis for understanding sustainability. We also know that sustainability is a constantly evolving discipline, with new issues, challenges and opportunities always needing to be addressed. We therefore welcome feedback, comments and suggestions so that we can continually improve our guidance and ensure our material is as fresh, relevant and accurate as possible. If you have any comments, please contact us in any language at: [sustainability@olympic.org](mailto:sustainability@olympic.org)

This guide was published in 2020.

## PRINTING

This document is available only as a downloadable pdf file from the IOC website. If you need to print a copy, please set your printer to double-sided copying on recycled paper. Ideally, please also avoid colour printing and copying.



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## SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT IN BRIEF

Sustainability should not sit apart from how the organisation is run. It needs to be integrated into the organisation as much as possible. Even if organisations get to the point of having a well-thought-out sustainability vision and strategy, there is often a gap between this and what needs to happen to make it a reality.

All organisations will have arrangements and rules for how the organisation is run, how decisions are made, how goods and services are sourced, how people are hired, how data is collected and managed, how things are communicated, and so on. A key area to look at is how these can be harnessed to more effectively embed sustainability into the organisation.

An often overlooked but simple truth is that the management and governance arrangements that exist within your organisation also require a lot of attention. Of course, there is no right or wrong answer to how this should be approached – but here are what are considered to be the three most important areas to look at:

**1**

### HOW DO THINGS GET DONE WITHIN THE ORGANISATION?

The challenge is not just in bridging the gap between your strategy and action. It is to do so in a way that begins to embed sustainability more securely throughout your organisation. Being a little more formalised and systematic in determining what needs to be done to tap into and supplement existing ways of working and decision-making will help you to embed sustainability more securely – even more so if you do it in a way which is in keeping with the organisation's culture. Just because a process is not documented or formal does not mean it is any less important – if it's how things have always been done or how certain teams work that may well be fine. This is an important point – don't fall into the trap of starting with a solution and looking for ways to make it fit. This will almost certainly fail. If ways of working are amended for sustainability it will also be necessary to ensure that accountabilities and 'checks and balances' are clear and in place.

**2**

### HOW WELL IS THE ORGANISATION SET UP TO DELIVER?

One of the more significant areas you will need to consider is how well placed your organisation is to deliver. For example, you will need to think about your resource needs and what learning and development needs your colleagues have (possibly even your supply chain or wider delivery partners too).

**3**

### CAN GOODS AND SERVICES BE DELIVERED MORE SUSTAINABLY?

It is very important to identify what needs to be done to ensure that sustainability is considered as part of day-to-day ways of working. Understanding business processes and controls and how they relate to each other to identify where interventions could be best made is key here – and one of the most effective ways for your organisation to put sustainability into practice is through your sourcing processes (the standalone Sustainability Essentials guide "Sustainable Sourcing in Sport" covers this aspect in much more detail).



# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Guide is intended to help organisations within the Olympic Movement and the wider sports sector implement sustainability more securely. All organisations have arrangements and rules for how the organisation is run, how decisions are made, how goods and services are sourced, how people are hired, how data are collected and managed, how things are communicated, and so on. A key area to look at is how these can be harnessed to more effectively embed sustainability into the organisation.

Many organisations get to the point of having a signed-off and well-thought-out sustainability vision and strategy often supported by policies, action plans and guidance documents. However, no matter how big or small the organisation, there is often a significant gap that exists between strategy and action.

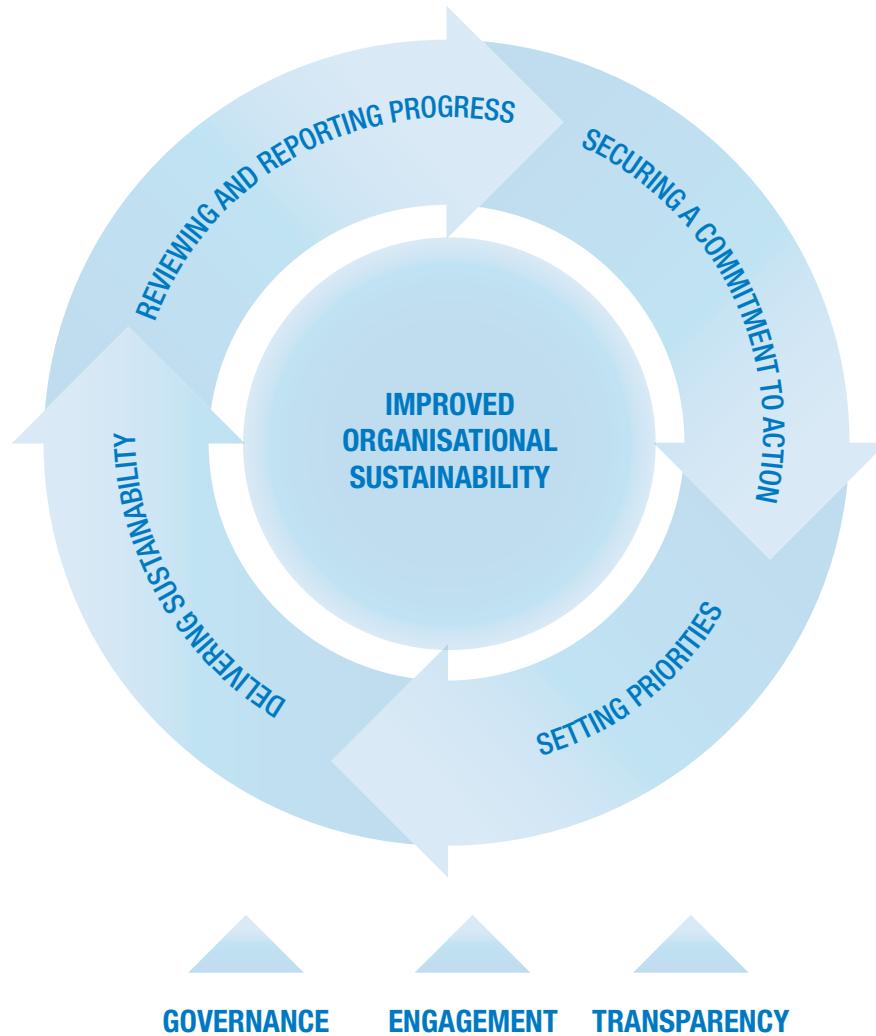
Although this Guide is presented as a stand-alone document, we recommend it is read in conjunction with the other Sustainability Essentials guides, in particular [Introduction to Sustainability](#) and [Sustainable Sourcing in Sport](#). This will enable you to see how sustainability management fits into the wider picture of sustainability in practice.

If your organisation is just starting out on a sustainability path, it is best to read this document in the sequence it is presented, so you can build up your approach in a logical order. For those at a more advanced level, this is intended as a useful reference guide and you may choose to focus on those sections you consider most relevant in your circumstances.

We fully recognise that your circumstances will be influenced by local culture, geography, legislative context and the economic situation. An organisation's ability to progress sustainability will also evolve over time and continually improve. However, we hope that structuring this Guide according to the four areas presented in the circular diagram on the following page will provide you with a logical pathway to becoming more sustainable, while allowing a degree of flexibility.

1. In '**Securing a Commitment to Action**', the Guide starts with outlining a fundamental part of the process which is to secure the buy-in of top management, understand your specific context and how sustainability can support your organisation's core business strategy.
2. In '**Setting Sustainability Priorities**', the Guide sets out how risks and opportunities may be identified and how they can be prioritised through goals, supporting strategies and policies.
3. In '**Delivering Sustainability**', the Guide covers how implementation may be approached.
4. In '**Reviewing and Reporting Progress**', the Guide outlines how implementation progress may be monitored, measured and communicated to key stakeholders.

In the final section, 'Enabling Sustainability', the Guide discusses several aspects that 'cross-cut', are key to supporting an organisation's ability to progress sustainability and are essential to every step that is taken.



In each section, we have highlighted key actions according to three levels of progress:

- **Basic level** – a meaningful start to sustainability management with a commitment to improve.
- **Intermediate level** – meeting the fundamentals of sustainability management.
- **Advanced level** – going beyond the fundamentals of sustainability management and demonstrating leadership in action.



## WHY TAKE A MORE 'SYSTEMATIC' APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY?

Over the last decade, learnings from early adopters of sustainability show that there are a number of actions that make delivery of multiple commitments and targets more effective and efficient. This means moving from managing issues on an ad-hoc basis to adopting a more 'systematic' approach. This generally results in a smarter way of managing and continually improving the overall sustainability performance.

A term that is commonly used in this context is 'management system'. Some find this term difficult to associate with, but all organisations small or large will have some form of a management system even if they do not think of it in these terms. It is not necessarily something you see – it is part of the very fabric of an organisation. Organisations have policies and ways of working (even if they are not formalised or written down) which – among other things – will define rules around how to run the business, how to source goods and services, how to hire people, how to communicate, and so on. A management system is essentially the sum of all these parts.



Definition of a management system from ISO 20121:2012:

*"Set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organisation to establish policies and objectives and processes to achieve those objectives."*



## HOW DOES THIS GUIDE RELATE TO THE ISO 20121 GLOBAL EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STANDARD?

The concept of event sustainability management is becoming more widespread. Organisers, event suppliers and venues are increasingly aware of the environmental, social, ethical and economic impacts of their activities.

Originally conceived in the run-up to the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, ISO 20121 sets out a management system framework for tackling priority sustainability risks and opportunities – be it reducing costs, limiting greenhouse gas emissions and waste, managing the biodiversity of venues, respecting human rights or achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Since its launch in June 2012, ISO 20121 has become a significant global standard for the event industry. Early adopters have included other Olympic and Paralympic organising committees (e.g. Rio 2016), International Federations (e.g. World Sailing) and major sporting venues. In fact, the International Olympic Committee now requires all host city organising committees to be certified to ISO 20121 standard at least three years before their Games.

This Guide is designed to help organisations within the Olympic Movement and the wider sports sector take a more ‘systematic’ approach to implementing sustainability. It is not a replacement for ISO 20121. However, if all the key steps are followed it should be easier to meet the full requirements of ISO 20121 if that is a desired outcome. It should be noted though that this Guide also covers aspects to consider which are not necessarily an implicit requirement of ISO 20121 (e.g. vision and strategy development and governance).

Appendix B provides further information on how this Guide aligns to ISO 20121 and Appendix C offers some guidance on how to make claims of compliance to this standard.

## WHY ADOPT A MORE SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO BUSINESS?

The rationale for engaging in sustainability as a core part of the way you do business is set out in detail in the first of the Sustainability Essentials guides: [Introduction to Sustainability](#).

In that introductory guide we explained how a genuine approach to sustainability goes beyond ad hoc projects and support for good causes, and instead requires a more comprehensive regime of policies, processes and practices that are integral to your organisation’s way of working. This is vital for addressing the real impacts that your activities have on people and the environment, and for understanding risks and opportunities for your organisation.

For sports organisations, key drivers may include responding to stakeholder expectations to maintain a social licence to operate, complying with legislation and regulation (cf. human rights due diligence), economic value creation and optimising the use of resources to reduce costs and environmental impact, as well as demonstrating leadership on the world stage and good standards of ethics and governance.

In a world where everything is increasingly more transparent and connected, understanding and managing the sustainability impact of business activities and decisions is becoming ever more critical. Integrating sustainability considerations into how business should be done is fast becoming the only way of doing business in the future.



## WHAT IS THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ADOPTING A MORE SUSTAINABLE APPROACH?

Organisations globally face a complex and fast-changing landscape. Societal values are shifting and organisations need to work hard to win trust and build community support. In parallel, resource constraints and environmental concerns put pressure on supply chains and profitability.

Many organisations hold back from taking action on sustainability because they fear it will cost too much. In fact, this need not be the case. Improved efficiency can lower costs. More sustainable organisations can also attract additional sponsorship revenue, and there are unseen benefits in reduced reputational risks and more motivated staff.

Not every sustainability benefit can be monetarised in the classic sense. Whilst financial capital is still the primary measure of

business performance and success, business needs more than this to deliver its goods and services – it needs people and knowledge, natural materials, social structures, machinery, infrastructure and financial investment. Indeed, it is estimated that over 80% of a business' value is estimated to comprise so-called intangible assets – typically human, intellectual and social capital. In other words, resources and relationships. Without building and maintaining adequate resources and relationships, many organisations are likely to increasingly struggle to grow and function in the way they do today. A growing number of organisations are therefore attempting to explore how, using resources and relationships, value in its widest sense is created over time.

In effect, there is increasing recognition around the world that unless organisations respond to the social, environmental and economic pressures of the future they may struggle to remain competitive or worse still, struggle to survive.

INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS  
INTO HOW BUSINESS SHOULD BE DONE IS  
FAST BECOMING THE ONLY WAY OF DOING  
BUSINESS IN THE FUTURE



SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

SECURING A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

# 2

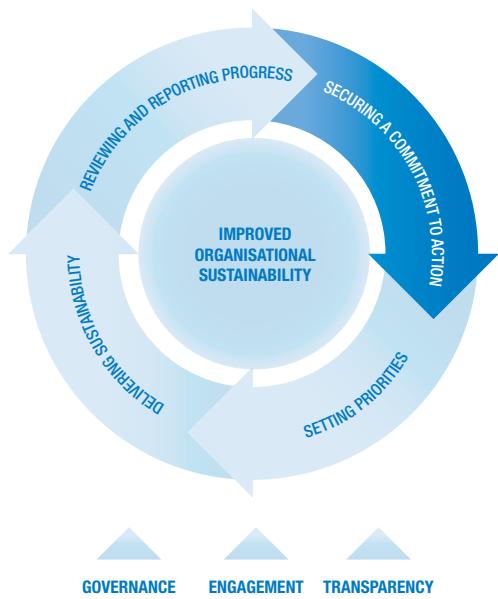
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## SECURING A COMMITMENT TO ACTION





# SECURING A COMMITMENT TO ACTION



## MAIN GOAL

To secure commitment from top management and understand how sustainability will support your core organisational purpose and strategy.

## COMMITMENT FROM THE TOP

It has to be a conscious decision to embark on a sustainability programme and that requires a clear commitment from top management. Adopting a more sustainable approach can be a complex undertaking that requires all stakeholders to be committed. Sustainability is not something that can be done as an ad hoc side project; it needs to fit into how your organisation works and support your core organisational strategy.

Nor can this be an overnight conversion. Whether you are an established organisation with existing suppliers and partners or starting out as an event-organising committee, putting in place sustainability policies and processes will require acceptance of new ways of working and a determination to follow through. This cannot happen without the full and engaged support of top management to show leadership and to enable those in charge of key parts of the organisation to adopt more sustainable practices. This step should not be skipped on the assumption that leadership commitment has already been secured.

Key questions to answer at this stage should include:

- What is our business case for sustainability?
- How sustainable are we – do we understand what we are already doing in this space?
- What do we mean by sustainability – do we understand what it means to us?
- What do our stakeholders think?



## BUILDING A BUSINESS CASE

In many respects building a business case on adopting more sustainable business practices is no different to building any other case for action. The key thing is to understand what ‘templates’ exist within the organisation and what has been found to work best.

There are four key elements that should be considered:



understand the issue – have a full appreciation of risks and opportunities;



make it relevant – link issue to core business, e.g. business purpose, strategic vision and objectives;



back it up – provide examples, data and supporting information for the topic – include financial costs and benefits where possible (these might be direct or indirect); and



keep it dynamic and updated – ensure the business case is dynamic and can evolve as organisational priorities, understanding and best practice changes.

You could reference what your organisation is already doing, some commentary on whether it is enough and what it will need to do in the future. It is also worth looking at what your peers or others outside of your sector have done to progress sustainability.

Feasibility and small-scale pilots should also be considered – bear in mind that they should preferably not progress without senior management being aware.

Business cases do not necessarily need to be lengthy – a simple email may be sufficient – this will very much depend on what key stakeholders in your organisation expect.

Additional tips and information are contained in guidance prepared by IEMA (the leading environmental and sustainability professional body) on [Climate Change Adaptation: Building the Business Case](#) and [Key Lessons from the Plan A Business Case](#) prepared by Marks & Spencer plc reflecting on the first five years of implementing Plan A (their sustainability programme).



It is therefore advisable to engage top management on sustainability and why it is important as soon as possible. This might be done through awareness-raising workshops with the senior leadership team on sustainability issues and how they may affect the organisation's licence to operate and future direction (see also the section on understanding organisational context, below). The following points set out some tips on how this might be approached:

- **Seek a senior leadership sustainability sponsor/advocate** – attempt to get a member of top management team bought-in and supportive of sustainability. If you have a Sustainability team ideally this would not be the director you report into.
- **Know your audience** – attempt to understand the personal interests and motivations of the individuals on the leadership team. Identify how sustainability may align with their interests and motivations and assign them roles and tasks on this basis.
- **Present solid sustainability opportunities** – this may include key facts and figures about the dual sustainability and commercial successes of recent Games (e.g. sponsorship opportunities, revenue generation and cost savings), keeping stakeholders supportive and advocates for your organisation, as well as providing external profile-raising opportunities for the senior leadership.
- **Focus on and identify issues which offer leadership opportunities** – sustainability is a big and complicated theme and whilst there

will be a range of things you will likely need to be address, it may be too problematic to explain and achieve buy-in in one go. Instead, identify key themes and trends happening globally or your country which may present leadership opportunities for your organisation and focus on this with top management.

- **Invite an inspirational speaker with public profile** – identify someone who the leadership will know and who is also a strong advocate for sustainability to speak and inspire and excite them into taking action. This may also lead to ambassadorial opportunities for the organisation. If there is a reluctance for this, other options might include inviting athletes who are also sustainability advocates (there are lots out there) or a senior representative from one of your sponsors who may be engaged in sustainability.
- **Arrange visits in your supply chain to reinforce the moral case** – identify opportunities for the leadership to visit sites (factories, farms, etc) which have been used to produce/supply items to help make sustainability issues more tangible for them and reinforce the moral case for sustainability.
- **Invite some critical stakeholders in**
  - identify some vocal critics from civil society and invite them in for some one-to-one meetings with key members of the leadership team.
- **Use the right language** – ensure language is tailored to the audience. Use business language, not technical or sustainability jargon or acronyms.



## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Leadership at the highest level of the organisation need to give solid and genuine commitment to sustainability. This means they need to go beyond simply delegating roles and responsibilities – they need to lead by example. For example, this might be as a result of:



their actions (e.g. making decisions and resolving issues);



their communications and how they engage with stakeholders;



promoting what the organisation is doing; and



looking for further opportunities for improvement.

When securing commitment from the top it is important that the structure of the entire organisation (both upwards and downwards) is considered to ensure commitment has come at a high-enough level to resolve issues that may arise during the implementation.

When engaging your senior leadership, it is important to really focus on ‘why’ sustainability is important – this is considered to be more important than ‘what’ and ‘how’. This will require a reasonable understanding of the

organisation’s sustainability issues. Consideration should therefore be given to conducting this exercise in parallel with other key steps in this chapter and the steps set out in the next chapter, ‘Setting Sustainability Priorities’.

However, it is also important to recognise that at the beginning of the process the initial business case may be quite general as you won’t have all the answers you feel you should have. You can refine and develop a more detailed case as you progress your sustainability journey.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PURPOSE AND MISSION?

An organisational ‘purpose’ is why an organisation chooses to exist beyond financial gain. A strong purpose sets out the organisation’s reason for existing; it explains why you do what you do. It is not what an organisation does – that is what is known as a ‘mission’ statement. Most purpose statements are honest, concise, direct and inspirational.



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR SPECIFIC CONTEXT

You will need to understand the internal and external issues that are relevant to your organisation's purpose and affect your ability to achieve it. It is always worth taking time to understand your current situation and the pressures and circumstances that are affecting (or will affect) the way your organisation operates. This includes all things that could affect the running of the organisation and includes positive or negative factors. Sustainability needs to help your organisation achieve its objectives, not hinder them.

Of course, the wider context in which organisations are operating is rapidly changing. Many believe that for companies to thrive long-term, purpose and sustainability must go hand in hand. Consumers, regulators, civil society and capital markets will, and already are, demanding it.

Examples of factors to identify and consider may include:

- social and cultural, political, legal, regulatory, financial, technological, economic, natural and competitive environment, whether international, national, regional or local;
- relationships with and perceptions of external stakeholders;
- key trends and drivers that may impact on the objectives of the organisation;
- governance, organisational structure, roles and accountabilities;
- strategies, policies, ways of working and goals that exist in the organisation;
- understanding of resources and relationships (e.g. financial capital, people, intellectual capital, etc);

- information systems, information flows and decision-making processes (however formal or informal);
- standards, guidelines and codes adopted by the organisation; and
- the form and extent of contractual relationships and commitments.

All the above factors are dynamic and will evolve over time – some more quickly than others. It is important to keep them under consideration. It may also be important to consider what other similar organisations are doing with regard to sustainability.

After taking a step back and looking at your organisation holistically to identify and consider the above issues, you then need to determine how they could:

- affect your ability to achieve your sustainability goals; or
- arise due to sustainability and affect your organisation's ability to meet its wider business objectives.

This type of exercise is best done in collaboration with your key internal and external stakeholders. Through such dialogue, you can better identify the likely risks and opportunities you will face and reinforce the case for action. Effective stakeholder engagement is a good way of fostering goodwill. In this context it is especially important to have a good relationship with suppliers and partners, so that they feel part of the programme.

This initial exercise to put your situation in its proper context is a way of building a case for action to convince your organisation's leadership team of the value of sustainability. Ultimately it will help you prioritise and communicate what you intend to do and why.



## ASSIGNING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It's not all about top management – involving individuals at all levels of the organisation helps to identify opportunities to drive sustainability forward. Leadership can present itself at all levels of your organisation to help build a business-wide approach to sustainability.

To develop and implement your sustainability programme, you'll need to include a number of individuals and organisations. As with any project, that needs careful coordination.

Ideally top management should nominate someone from the senior leadership team to take overall responsibility for sustainability. In turn, the nominee should then give an individual (or team) the necessary day-to-day authority to progress sustainability in the organisation.

You will need to establish a core team to drive the process forward and help keep your goals firmly in sight. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to this it will depend on how your organisation is set up and organised.

At the simplest level you could nominate 'sustainability champions' in each budget-owning team. Their role will be to promote the initiative and to support their colleagues in implementing the correct processes. They will be the initial 'go-to' people for advice.

Equally, this need not necessarily be a large team. Whichever approach is chosen, you will need to make sure it has the necessary mandate or 'licence to operate' from top management to avoid it being seen as a side project.

At this early stage, begin to outline the roles and responsibilities of those involved in implementing elements of the sustainability programme – particularly those in top management and the core team. It is also advisable to consider the resources that are required to take things forward. For example, identifying tasks that can be done in-house versus those that may require a degree of external resource.

IN VOLVING INDIVIDUALS AT ALL LEVELS  
OF THE ORGANISATION HELPS TO  
IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO DRIVE  
SUSTAINABILITY FORWARD



### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK AT THIS STAGE ARE:

- How receptive is the culture of your organisation to what is being proposed and what changes may be required?
- Where are we in relation to sustainability – what have we achieved, where do we want to end up and why?
- What is our vision in relation to sustainability – what outcome are we ultimately wanting to achieve and in what timeframe?
- What things have we already committed to do – do we want to build on this or make new commitments?
- What are we willing to accept or not accept responsibility for? Societal and stakeholder perceptions should be taken in account here.
- What is your scope and where are your boundaries? What issues are you willing or not willing to accept responsibility for? Will your strategy apply to all parts of your organisation or only certain parts of it? How does this align with the views of your stakeholders?
- To what extent will you engage and consult with your key stakeholders on your vision and strategy (and policy – see below)?

## DEVELOPING YOUR SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Sustainability needs to be integrated at the highest level to set the tone, direction and priorities for the entire organisation.

A good way of doing this is to produce a Sustainability Strategy. This should describe your vision, high-level goals and delivery approach, aligned with your organisation's wider strategy and goals. If you operate in multiple territories or jurisdictions you should ensure your strategy reflects this.

In addition to setting an overall strategic direction and objectives, the Sustainability Strategy should clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for sustainability; internal and external resource requirements; monitoring and measurement; and key barriers and challenges (see also the section on Enabling Sustainability).

The document does not have to be very long or complex but should as a minimum outline how your sustainability intentions will be delivered over a given timeframe. It should be communicated across the organisation and ideally externally. You are encouraged to publish at least a summary of this document on your website.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VISION AND A STRATEGY?

- A vision is a short, succinct and inspiring forward-looking statement of what an organisation intends to achieve at some point in the future (say in 5-10 years' time). It sets out your organisation's future aspirations without giving a reason 'why' or 'how'.
- A strategy outlines where an organisation is, where it wants to be, what it will focus on, who it will work with and the key steps it intends to take to get it to where it wants to be.



## DRAFTING A SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

It is recommended that a Sustainability Policy is drafted to help provide focus for your organisation. It should refer to and reinforce your sustainability strategy.

During previous steps you should have identified what policies already exist and what commitments you have made or are looking to make. The Sustainability Policy is an overarching policy but does not necessarily replace other existing policies. You will need to ensure that there are no potential conflicts and consider whether current commitments in other policies still hold true.

You should also have begun to think about, or reaffirm, what sustainability commitments mean to your organisation.

This written ‘statement of intent’ should outline your organisation’s sustainability vision and is what should drive the whole of the organisation. When finalised it should be a publicly available

declaration of your intentions and commitment to improving your sustainability performance. In many respects it is a ‘contract’ made between your organisation and your stakeholders.

A typical Sustainability Policy should include the broad sustainability commitments and intentions of your organisation and be between one and two sides of A4. It should refer to your strategy, your sustainability priorities and long-term goals and what you intend to do to fulfil your commitments. Avoid use of jargon or vague statements that cannot be substantiated (e.g. avoid using terms like ‘environmentally friendly’). The policy needs to strike a careful balance between having appropriate detail to be set the tone and direction without being so specific that need it needs frequent alterations and reissues. Having said this, it will of course need to be reviewed on a periodic basis.

The policy should reflect what you intend to do and must be signed off by top management and dated.

SUSTAINABILITY NEEDS TO BE INTEGRATED  
AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL TO SET THE TONE,  
DIRECTION AND PRIORITIES FOR THE  
ENTIRE ORGANISATION



## CONFIRMING AND CONTINUALLY IMPROVING YOUR VISION, STRATEGY AND POLICY

You should ultimately aim to finalise or reaffirm your sustainability vision, strategy and policy and seek appropriate endorsements from top management.

This is an ongoing 'live' process though and as your knowledge and understanding of sustainability improves, you should look to revise and continually improve what you have in place. For example, more in-depth understanding of your key or material sustainability issue and the needs and expectations of your stakeholders may mean that the focus of your Sustainability Strategy will need to change, which in turn will affect what is set out in your Sustainability Policy.

## KEY ACTIONS

<b>Basic Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Top management commitment has been secured and an initial sustainability strategy and policy has been developed.</li><li>• A small project team has been established to take sustainability forward within the organisation.</li></ul>
<b>Intermediate Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Top management commitment has been secured and a sustainability vision, strategy, policy and time-bound set of objectives have been developed in alignment with the organisation's overall purpose and objectives.</li><li>• Key roles and responsibilities for sustainability have been assigned and provided with an appropriate level of support from top management.</li></ul>
<b>Advanced Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Top management commitment has been secured and a comprehensive sustainability vision, strategy, policy and time-bound set of objectives have been developed in alignment with the organisation's overall purpose and objectives and with input from key external stakeholders.</li><li>• A member of the senior leadership team has been assigned to take overall responsibility for sustainability with oversight of individuals responsible for day-to-day responsibility for sustainability.</li></ul>



SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

SETTING SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES

# 3

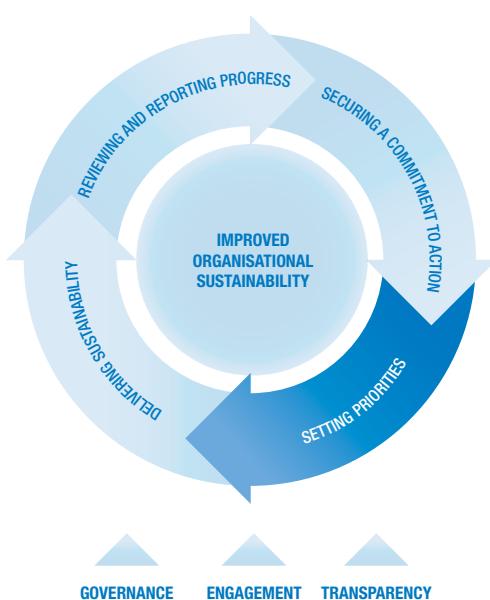
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## SETTING SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES





# SETTING SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES



## MAIN GOAL

To set key sustainability priorities and goals for your organisation which are supported by a clear roadmap.

## DETERMINING YOUR OBLIGATIONS

Compliance with the law is step one on the path towards improving your sustainability performance. Many of the sustainability issues you will be looking to manage will have some form of legal baseline against which you should be looking to exceed in most instances. There is also a moral duty to comply with the law. Can an organisation claim to be committed to sustainability if they are not in compliance with the law? A confirmed breach of legislation could also completely undermine everything you are setting out to achieve – the Volkswagen diesel scandal is a key example of this.

You should be looking to establish your level of conformity with or performance against:

- local, national, regional and international legislation;
- internal standards and initiatives;
- contractual requirements laid down by stakeholders where they contain environmental, social or ethical criteria; and
- best practice codes of conduct or practice and other voluntary instruments (e.g. Olympic Charter).

It is important to establish what you are obligated to comply with currently and what might be on the immediate horizon in all territories where you operate. To some extent this means building on steps outlined in the previous chapter with a more detailed review (i.e. beyond the ‘helicopter view’ you should now have). However, this might only be for certain issues (e.g. environmental, health and safety or employment law) and this also may only exist in several areas of your organisation and will not have been pulled together in one place, which is what you should be striving for.

Given the all-embracing nature of the sustainability agenda, it will be difficult to find one resource that answers to all your legislative questions. As a result, you will need to draw on a range of resources, ranging from government websites, industry associations and trade groups, commercial databases and publications, professional advisors and consultancy services.



### RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE TOPICS INCLUDE:

- access to information;
- air quality;
- animal welfare;
- anti-bribery, corruption and whistleblowing;
- biodiversity;
- climate change;
- consumer rights;
- contaminated land;
- corporate governance;
- diversity and inclusion;
- energy;
- employment law;
- hazardous substances;
- health & safety;
- human rights (including due diligence);
- hygiene;
- local environmental quality (including noise and nuisance);
- non-financial performance reporting;
- marine environment;
- natural and built environment;
- packaging;
- pollution control;
- product safety;
- radioactive substances;
- town and country planning;
- transport;
- waste;
- water; and
- wildlife protection.

Once you have pulled together all your obligations into one place, ideally a concise register of sorts, it is advisable to determine your level of conformity against each obligation and what improvements may be required. At this stage it is also advisable to consider who will be responsible for managing and

updating this register going forward and how key requirements are communicated internally. If you are due to conduct any business activities in a new territory this should be ideally be updated to capture any new obligations your organisation might be expected to adhere to.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW IS STEP ONE  
ON THE PATH TOWARDS IMPROVING YOUR  
SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE



## ENGAGING AND PRIORITISING STAKEHOLDERS

If compliance with the law is the first step on the path towards improved sustainability then stakeholder engagement is the path's foundation.

Stakeholders both inside and outside your organisation can bring valuable insight, expertise and experience; help identify issues you may have missed; and act as advocates for your sustainability programme. The better engaged you are with your stakeholders, the more robust and defensible your sustainability programme will be. Of course, you will already be engaging a wide range of stakeholders ranging including employees, suppliers, sports organisations and event participants every day. But to what extent are you engaging your stakeholders to seek their views and input on sustainability issues?

Engaging with stakeholders on sustainability matters provides the following benefits by helping you to:

- **understand what is important** to you and them and prioritise issues to manage and what to report;
- **gain access to additional resource** with fresh ideas and expertise which may not exist within your organisation; and
- **gain buy-in and support** which may lead to them to spreading your sustainability messages or supporting you in tough times.

There are a number of helpful resources on stakeholder engagement (see Appendix D for Guidance). But the three key steps can be summed up as follows:

- 1. Map your stakeholders** according to groups (e.g. NGO, government, supplier, employee, sponsor, event participant, etc.).
- 2. Determine the level of interest and influence** they have in your organisation.
- 3. Tailor your engagement approach** according to importance – prioritise those with a high level of interest and influence.

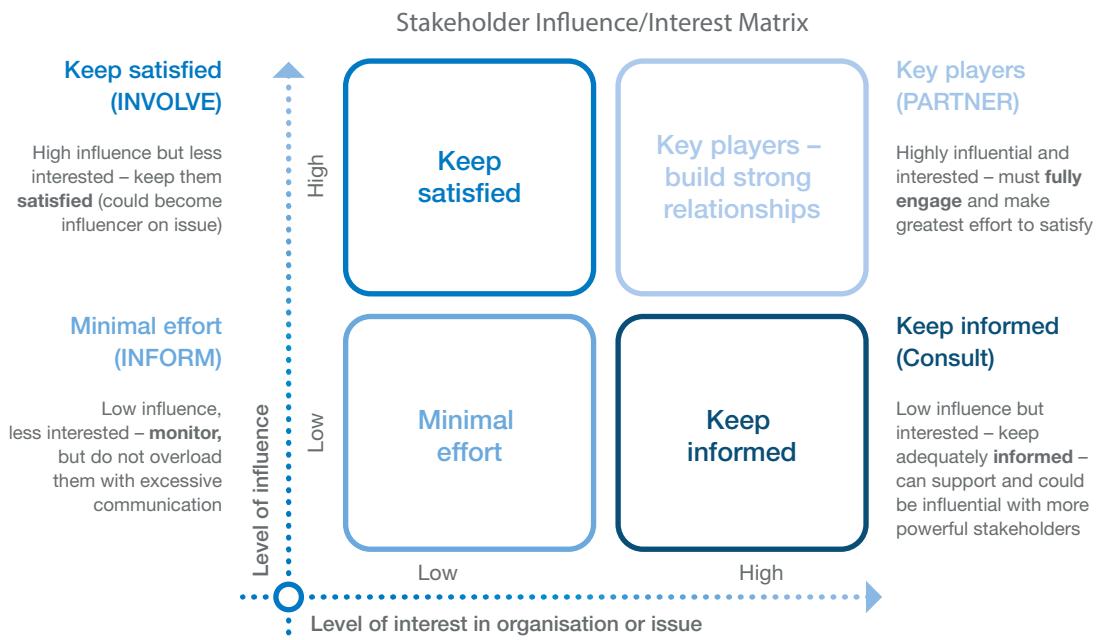
You will be engaging with stakeholders through a variety of means. This might be through social media, ticketing, media/press briefings, employee engagement forums or channels and forums for specialist stakeholders on specific topics. The goal is to identify all the major engagement activities and bring them all together.

You will need to undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify who is being engaged and who is not but needs to be. You will need to understand their views and interests, how they relate to your sustainability programme and other stakeholders, and then take a view on how relevant they are to you and identify the key or most important issues.

### WHAT IS A STAKEHOLDER?

A stakeholder is any individual or group which affects, or is affected by, the organisation.

*NOTE: Some stakeholders may not be able to represent themselves but their interests should still be considered.*



One approach is to identify stakeholders by category as there are many potential different groups, for example, employees, NGO and civil society, event participants, athletes, government, etc. This may not always be realistic as many stakeholders may not fit neatly into one category.

It is unlikely you will be able to engage with every group of stakeholders, so to help you identify the key ones consider the following questions:

- Which stakeholders engage regularly with your organisation?
- Which stakeholder groups are well represented and which ones less so?
- Which stakeholders have skills and expertise that might be helpful to you?

- Which stakeholders have significant influence and who with (e.g. your peers, NGOs, general public, etc.)?
- Which stakeholders have the legal right to be consulted?
- Which stakeholders could undermine the credibility of your sustainability programme if they are not engaged?
- Which marginalised or vulnerable stakeholders are impacted by your operations?

You may find that this is a bit of an iterative exercise and that you need to undertake several mapping exercises for different aspects of your emerging sustainability programme. For example, stakeholders will range from having an interest in your entire organisation to those



who will only be interested in a specific topic (e.g. single-use plastics, human rights etc). It may also be advisable to determine their level of interest and influence – there are several tools available to help in this regard (e.g. using an interest/influence matrix). For instance, you should be looking to build strong relationships with those stakeholders who have a high level of interest and influence in your organisation or issue (see diagram below).

Ideally you should be looking to develop an overarching stakeholder engagement strategy which summarises your key engagement channels. This should capture those established channels that are inherent in your organisation and those you may need to introduce to support your sustainability programme. This should be supported by appropriate plans which set out how the strategy will be delivered, key tasks and timelines, engagement leads and any engagement outcomes. This should be kept under continual review as your key stakeholders may change over time.

## IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITISING ISSUES

Sustainability issues can present both risks (e.g. rising cost of energy) and opportunities (e.g. improved operational efficiency) to your organisation.

In attempting to identify your sustainability issues you are likely to end up with a long list of issues you could attempt to progress, but this is unlikely to be realistic. Identifying the issues that are most important is therefore key to moving forward. To maximise opportunities and mitigate risks you will need to:

- **identify potential issues and impacts**, both positive and negative, direct and indirect and then establish their significance in terms of impact and likelihood; and
- **prioritise actions and allocate resources** to maximise opportunities and minimise risks, to achieve the organisation's sustainability vision and strategy.

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES CAN PRESENT BOTH RISKS (E.G. RISING COST OF ENERGY) AND OPPORTUNITIES (E.G. IMPROVED OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY)



You need to come up with a shortlist of what's relevant to you and your stakeholders. There is no right or wrong way to do this – as long as it works for your organisation. You'll almost certainly evolve and improve this over time.

There are a number of helpful resources on identifying sustainability issues (see Appendix D for Guidance). The Sustainability Essentials guide [Sustainable Sourcing in Sport](#) also includes a list of sustainability issues relevant to sourcing goods and services. But the five key steps can be summed up as follows:



### 1. Cast the net wide:

identify your longlist of potential direct (e.g. organisational) and indirect (e.g. supply chain) issues. Remember to include anything that you identified as part of understanding your organisation's context and engaging with key stakeholders (see previous chapter).



### 2. Categorise the issues:

how can you divide your longlist into categories? Aim to be specific (e.g. 'organisational greenhouse gas emissions' rather than 'climate change') and avoid any duplication.



### 3. Initial prioritisation:

rank the issues according to relevance (to your sport or organisation), likelihood, scale of impact, legal obligations and whether you have control or influence.



### 4. Consult your organisation:

engage with key colleagues and teams to seek their views on your initial prioritisation and appetite for action – and then revise your list as appropriate.



### 5. Consult key external stakeholders:

by this stage you should have a shortlist, which shows what's most important to your organisation. You should ideally be open to sense-checking these with your key stakeholders (e.g. you may not agree with what your external stakeholders feel is important, or there may be some things that you can't tackle at this stage).



For more information on determining which sustainability issues matter most, see [Introduction to Sustainability](#) (pages 27-28).

Your final shortlist of priority issues shows you where to focus your attention and what your sustainability programme needs to address. Don't expect to get the list right straightaway. You'll be able to refine and improve it over time. You may also need to revisit your Sustainability Policy as a result of identifying your key sustainability issues.

In the end you will need to make a judgement on the materiality (or significance) of the issues raised. By seeking input from key internal and external stakeholders and reviewing your own objectives, activities and risks, you should have all the information necessary to make an informed choice of the issues to prioritise. Ultimately, there is no absolute right or wrong answer. This is about being confident that you have identified the issues that are most relevant to your context and being comfortable that you are able to justify these choices.

## ESTABLISHING YOUR GOALS

You now should have a sustainability vision, strategy, policy and a priority set of sustainability issues. Now you need to get more specific about what you want to achieve and how you're going to do it.

The next stage is to establish a set of goals and measures to monitor how the organisation is progressively improving its sustainability performance. This is also a great way to focus

attention and create a shared ambition for everyone to buy into and work towards. They help people understand what sustainability is all about and – more importantly – how it applies to the organisation and their role. Goals and measures can be set at an organisational, functional, supplier/product or event level, or they can be assigned to individuals.

There is no set way to establish goals and measures. Drawing on your priority or key issues, think about:

- **the issue** – what is the risk or the opportunity?
- **the aim** – what do you ultimately want to achieve?
- **the objective** – how specifically will you meet this aim? and
- **the supporting targets** – what outcome(s) do you need to achieve to meet a specific objective?

Goals should ideally be stretching but achievable – they should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART). When you set your objectives and targets, ensure that they align with your policy, the resources you will need to deliver them and how you will measure success. You may be unable to set a target due to insufficient information. It's perfectly fine to measure something (e.g. waste) one year with a view to setting a target the following year, for example.



In general, there are three main types of goals:

- **quantitative goals** where specific measurements are required to assess progress (e.g. achieve an average of 120g per km or less of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions across a small passenger car fleet – no more than 8 seats in addition to driver's seat – sourced for an event);
- **improvement-based goals** based on practical interventions that seek to reduce the impacts of goods and services through the stipulation of specified technologies or practices (e.g. reduce the overall carbon footprint of logistics transportation through use of zero or low carbon vehicles); and
- use of **recognised sustainability standards/labels** to provide assurance that goods and services have been sourced/produced to agreed practices (e.g. 100% wood and wood-derived materials/products sourced must be Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®) certified with full chain of custody throughout the supply chain).

These three approaches are not mutually exclusive, and your approach is likely to involve a mix of each. The main thing is that you are clear about why you are adopting a specific

set of goals and that these align with your wider sustainability programme and general organisational objectives.

Goals may also be 'absolute' or 'relative'.

- **Absolute targets** are hard and fast and are a direct measure of performance regardless of any variables (such as changes in the organisation) although there may be an established baseline or reference scenario against which progress will be measured (e.g. X% reduction in absolute carbon footprint (tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e) from a 2017/18 baseline).
- **Relative targets** are normalised according to variables, i.e. they take account of year-on-year changes taking place in the business (e.g. reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by X% per product produced between April 2015 and March 2020).

As to which approach to take, it is not necessarily straightforward and will require careful consideration and discussion. On the one hand an absolute target may constrain an organisation particularly if it is in a period of growth, and on the other, relative targets may open you up to stakeholder criticism if they are not considered ambitious enough.

THERE IS NO ONE CORRECT  
APPROACH – IT WILL DEPEND ON YOUR  
CIRCUMSTANCES AND WHAT YOU ARE  
ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE



Here are some key questions you may wish to consider in this regard:

- Do you need something to be quantified (e.g. for reporting purposes)?
- Do you want to be able to measure these improvements against specific targets?
- Do you want to measure improvements in key issue areas such as greenhouse gas emissions, water, air quality, waste, labour/human rights or community relations?
- Do you need publicly credible assurances related to recognised standards or adherence to standards that will enable you to make certain claims?

All the above will be heavily influenced by the nature and scale of your business and supply chains; availability of resources; and the capability and capacity of your colleagues, suppliers and business partners. There is no one correct approach – it will depend on your circumstances and what you are attempting to achieve.

You will most likely start out by measuring basic inputs (e.g. number of audits carried out of high-risk suppliers/partners, or the amount of certain materials sourced over a given time). As you develop your sustainability programme further, you should shift to measuring more tangible outcomes (e.g. incidence of forced labour, amount of waste reduced etc). This outcome-based approach will be the most informative way of assessing progress against your sustainability goals. See also the section on 'Reviewing and Reporting Progress'.

## WHAT IS AN OUTCOME?

Outputs and outcomes can often be conflated – but they are different. Outputs are essentially things that are produced or delivered (be it physical or digital), for example training or manufacturing of products. Outcomes are the difference these things make – either positive or negative, for example reduced waste or fewer accidents.

A better understanding of outcomes will help determine which issues are material and require managing.



## DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN AND ROADMAP

Before you proceed any further drawing on the outputs of all the previous steps, it is advisable to develop a clear action plan and roadmap of what your organisation wants to achieve by when. Regardless of how robust your Sustainability Strategy is, it will not be enough to provide your organisation with everything that is required to secure its delivery.

Key questions to consider at this stage include:

- **What is your approach to sourcing goods and supply chain management,** including tender evaluation and contract management (see also Sustainability Essentials guide: [Sustainable Sourcing in Sport](#))?
- **What existing business processes do you need to ‘tap into’ or what further mechanisms need to be introduced?** It's always better to adapt existing ways of working to achieve your goals.

- **Which departments and functions are high sustainability priorities** versus those of lesser priority, including ones are more engaged than others (teams and senior managers)?
- **What are your sustainability goals and measures and who is responsible for monitoring and recording progress against them?** Some teams may contribute to the same goals but in different ways; others may not have much involvement at all.

You will need to identify how you intend to deliver what needs to be done (e.g. actions on priority sustainability issues and goals), timeframes, resource needs, roles and responsibilities and so on. You will also need to consider how to embed these actions into key organisational ways of working – however formal or informal these are.

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY  
REPRESENTS MAJOR CHANGE. IN MOST  
ORGANISATIONS, MAJOR CHANGE REQUIRES  
FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTS IN CULTURE



Consideration should also be given to what may be required in terms of supporting strategies, plans, policies and ways of working, and so on. These may be organisation-wide (e.g. a strategy for tackling greenhouse gas emissions or embedding sustainability in the sourcing of goods and services), specific to an issue (e.g. a policy on packaging), department- or function-specific (e.g. sustainability plans for transport, logistics, technology, etc.), simply embedding a requirement in a business process, or any combination thereof. This enables different parts of your organisation to contribute via different actions to the same overall goal or goals. The eventual approach will of course very much depend on the nature and scale of the business.

You may also need to embed sustainability considerations into other organisational processes that are in place (e.g. sourcing/procurement, information systems, learning and development, recruitment, and so on) (see also next chapter).

Whatever approach is taken it is important to ensure that all individuals who need to be involved in delivery are clear on what needs to be done. The outputs from previous chapters should have provided you with a good insight into how your organisation is managed and what governance arrangements exist (or don't as the case may be).

What you end up with will need to be communicated simply to a wide audience. Your plans will also need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure you're as effective as possible.

Implementing sustainability represents major change. In most organisations, major change requires fundamental shifts in culture. Change often fails to get off the ground, stalls soon after commencement, or eventually collapses because the prevailing culture (beliefs, thinking and behaviour) of an organisation is incompatible with what the organisation is trying to achieve. This was touched on in the chapter on 'Securing a Commitment to Action' but change management will be discussed more in the final chapter, 'Enabling Sustainability'.

## KEY ACTIONS

Basic Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of conformity established against key obligations, key stakeholders have been identified, key sustainability issues identified and used to develop a basic set of sustainability goals.</li> </ul>
Intermediate Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of conformity established for all obligations, key stakeholders and sustainability issues have been identified and a set of time-bound goals relevant to the organisation have been established, supported by a clear delivery action plan and roadmap.</li> </ul>
Advanced Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of conformity established for all obligations, key stakeholders and sustainability issues have been identified and a comprehensive set of time-bound goals relevant to the organisation have been established with input from key external stakeholders, supported by a clear delivery action plan and roadmap. Goals are outcome-based wherever possible.</li> </ul>



SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

DELIVERING SUSTAINABILITY

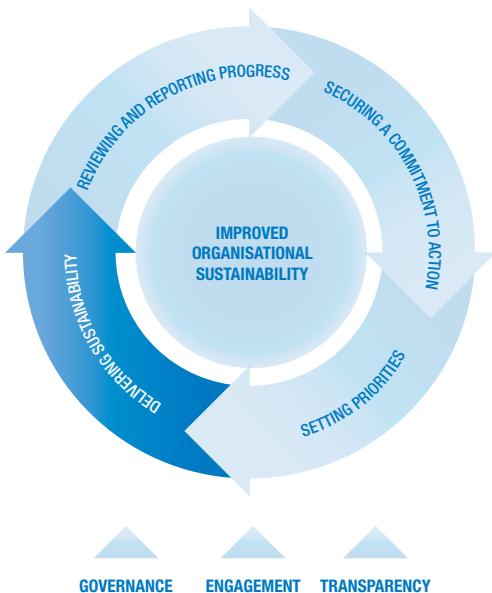
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## DELIVERING SUSTAINABILITY



# DELIVERING SUSTAINABILITY



## MAIN GOAL

To implement sustainability practices throughout the organisation and across the organisation's value chain.

## EXERTING CONTROL

This is where your management system starts to take effect by putting appropriate sustainability controls or interventions in place – either internally or through your suppliers. At this stage your objective will be to better align your day-to-day decisions and activities with your sustainability programme. You will need to map out and evaluate what's in place and the extent to which this will help sustainability efforts.

You will need to have a comprehensive look at your organisation and identify things you really need to control and manage. You will also be diplomatic and constructively challenge the norm. For example, why is something done in a certain way? Who owns the process? Why originally signed the process off – or has something simply become a way of working by default?

Examples of processes to consider include:

- **overarching management arrangements** – those that control how your organisation is run and how decisions are made;
- **operational processes** – those which are core to the organisation such as sourcing/procurement, event production, logistics, security and so on; and
- **support processes** – those that support and underpin the running of the business such as finance, HR, IT, legal, risk assurance, internal audit, communications, or formal committees or forums with decision-making powers, and so on.

Examples of controls include policies, documented procedures or standards, plans, supplier contracts/agreements, use of trained staff or suppliers, and so on.

Not everything will need to include consideration of sustainability matters. You will need to identify, and in some instances prioritise, the processes that are most critical to influence. This will depend on your sustainability vision, strategy and goals you are looking to achieve.



In all cases you should be asking yourself the following in the context of 'business as usual' and an 'extreme' scenario, where something might go wrong – key questions are:

- **Is there a sustainability angle** to the process/control and is it important to the delivery of your sustainability goals?
- **Is an existing process/control suitable from a sustainability perspective** – can something happen without any consideration for sustainability? Is it aligned with your objectives and targets? Does it need to be modified?
- **Do you need a new process/control**, or do you need to do something else to achieve your desired outcome?

Reporting and escalation is another issue that needs to be considered. For example, what happens if a process is not being followed, an impasse is reached with a specific individual or team, or a deviation is required from an agreed policy position? Does a formal route of

escalation exist for a business decision to be made and how high should this go? Governance is considered further in the 'Enabling Sustainability' section.

There is no right or wrong approach to introducing controls or interventions on sustainability. It is about determining the best approach for your organisation which is in keeping with the prevailing culture, making sure roles and responsibilities are clear and a clear route of escalation exists where necessary.

Effective engagement with key individuals and teams is critical – they will know how things work far better than you. Often it may be a case of setting out where you want to get to, and they will suggest what will work best.

Sporting events are often high-pressure situations – so even if you think suitable measures are in place, it's a good idea to expect the unexpected. If something unexpected happens you will need to review any ways of working to ensure the best overall alignment with your organisation's sustainability programme.

THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG  
APPROACH TO INTRODUCING CONTROLS  
OR INTERVENTIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY.  
IT IS ABOUT DETERMINING THE BEST  
APPROACH FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

## SOURCING OF GOODS AND SERVICES

All sports organisations will have a significant impact through their sourcing and procurement decisions and the actions of goods and services suppliers. You will need to determine how your supply chain will support the delivery of your sustainability programme. A key consideration will therefore be to determine the extent to which you will be dependent on your supply chain to deliver any goals that exist at an organisational level.

At this point you should refer to the complementary Sustainability Essentials guide [Sustainable Sourcing in Sport](#) which covers sustainable sourcing in detail. It is intended to help organisations within the Olympic Movement and the wider sports sector to adopt more sustainable sourcing practices.

## BUILDING CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

The success of your sustainability programme will be heavily dependent on:

- how **competent, engaged and motivated** your staff and supply chain are; and
- how **additional resources** can be leveraged internally and/or externally.

Specific sustainability tasks may well have been assigned to key individuals, teams, suppliers and others – but do they have everything they need to fulfil these roles? Referring to your sustainability vision, strategy, policy, goals and supporting action plans, you will need to identify the types and levels of resources required.

It's vital that all relevant individuals and teams are appropriately trained to fulfil their sustainability duties. You will need to continually review their learning and development needs and update training programmes as appropriate.

Ideally you should be looking to incorporate your sustainability vision into your recruitment and induction programmes including relevant individual job descriptions. Training needs may also be identified for senior management as well.

IDEALLY YOU SHOULD BE LOOKING TO INCORPORATE YOUR SUSTAINABILITY VISION INTO YOUR RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION PROGRAMMES



## ESTABLISHING STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY OR SPECIALIST WORKING GROUPS

There will be limits to the sustainability knowledge and expertise that exists within your organisation, particularly given the range of sustainability issues that need to be managed. As highlighted in the previous chapter, stakeholder engagement is a critical aspect of any credible sustainability programme. One of the benefits of stakeholder engagement is that stakeholders can help you understand and respond to emerging environmental, social and ethical issues.

Many organisations establish stakeholder advisory or specialist working groups for a wide range of topics. Such groups bring together expert stakeholders from outside the organisation with key stakeholders from inside the organisation. They are not just a mechanism for stakeholders to offer a view, but a forum for dialogue and mutual learning, which helps to shape strategies and plans.

Such groups need to have expertise in the relevant subject from a cross-section of organisation types such as NGOs, academia, government agencies, businesses (including sponsors) and other civil society organisations. The groups need to be carefully managed to ensure they remain focussed and are not distracted by immaterial issues or solutions that are not in your organisation's remit.

Where a dedicated piece of work is needed, you may still need to commission relevant expertise and use the group as a sounding board and 'critical friend' reviewer.

These groups would be task-specific and disbanded once their work is complete. Their structure, governance, transparency, reporting and communications is also important to consider. Each group needs its own terms of reference and, where necessary, all parties need to be substance to a Non Disclosure Agreement. While members of the group would be attached to a specific organisation, ideally, they would be willing to act in an individual capacity.

STAKEHOLDERS CAN HELP  
YOU UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND  
TO EMERGING ENVIRONMENTAL,  
SOCIAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES



You could also explore integrating sustainability into personal development plans, performance management systems and bonus criteria for key employees. People will generally respond better when they know how sustainability fits in with their other priorities.

You will need to tap into a range of resources to help you achieve your sustainability goals. This may include additional staff or staff with specific expertise, training and development of key teams, specialist consultancy services, specialist technology and contingency budgets.

These additional resources need not always come at a direct cost to your organisation. For example, can you leverage additional support and resources from partners and other organisations such as trade associations that are working on similar initiatives to help you through the “learning curve”? There are several other avenues that could also be explored in this respect, such as:

- **leveraging government resources** for advice, training and awareness;
- **participating in collaborative programmes** with other organisations in the Olympic Movement, wider industry or suppliers to share knowledge and technology;
- **participating in industry or trade forums** to identify and address common issues, share experiences, engage external resources, and so on;
- **exploring whether there are any sponsorship opportunities** of relevance to sustainability or whether you are eligible to apply for any sources of grant funding;

- **identifying and reviewing existing sustainability specific education initiatives** such as lessons-learned case studies, webinars and workshops, and;

- **identifying what support your stakeholders may be able to provide at no or limited cost** (e.g. provision of specialist secondees) particularly if there is a mutual legacy benefit.

Once it is established and operating as intended, sustainability itself does not necessarily require significant ongoing resource, provided it is properly part of your day-to-day management system – it is a process, not a budget line. In time you should begin to realise cost savings (e.g. energy or fuel conservation measures), safeguard the organisation against rising costs (such as strategic sourcing opportunities), identify other revenue opportunities (such as sharing recycling revenues with waste contractors or carving out specific sustainability sponsorship opportunities) and experience other benefits such as improved stakeholder relations.

Occasions when additional costs might occur in operation are when issues arise requiring special investigations, audits and implementation of supply chain grievance mechanisms. These can be budgeted for in contingency funds, as they might not be required but if cases do occur, it will be essential to act promptly and not to have to wait to secure budget.

The organisation’s knowledge and understanding will continue to evolve as your sustainability programme matures and evolves. There will be considerable lessons learned (i.e. what went well and what didn’t go well) and it is important that attempts are made to capture this learning to enable opportunities for innovation and performance improvements to be identified.



## COMMUNICATING YOUR EFFORTS

There are many reasons to raise awareness of your sustainability programme and promote its existence and achievements both internally and externally. It will help you engage and motivate people across the business and create a positive culture. As well as maintaining good dialogue with key stakeholders and build strong partnerships, this may help you receive and respond to enquiries and feedback and generate positive media coverage.

Start by reviewing how you currently engage and communicate with the stakeholders you've already identified (see previous chapter). Ideally you should be looking to support dialogue on sustainability and complement your wider stakeholder engagement and communication efforts.

Key questions to ask when determining your approach to internal and external communications include:

SUSTAINABILITY IS AN INCREDIBLY  
COMPLEX SUBJECT TO  
COMMUNICATE. IT MAY WELL BE  
NECESSARY TO SIMPLIFY MESSAGES  
AND TALK IN A LANGUAGE PEOPLE CAN  
RELATE TO AND UNDERSTAND



### INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

- How does sustainability fit into your wider internal communications plans?
- Do you know who your internal stakeholders are, what information they are interested in and when they would like it?
- How do you communicate sustainability information to key internal stakeholders?
- How do you communicate sustainability information to employees and suppliers?
- How do you communicate sustainability achievements internally?
- How do you receive and respond to internal enquiries on sustainability matters? Are the right people informed or consulted internally?
- Do you have internal communications lines prepared on key aspects of your programme – e.g. key targets and issues or where you do not necessarily have a firm policy stance?
- Do you consider sustainability angles to wider communications to ensure joined-up messaging – e.g. could an internal announcement be at complete odds with your sustainability vision or strategy?



### EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

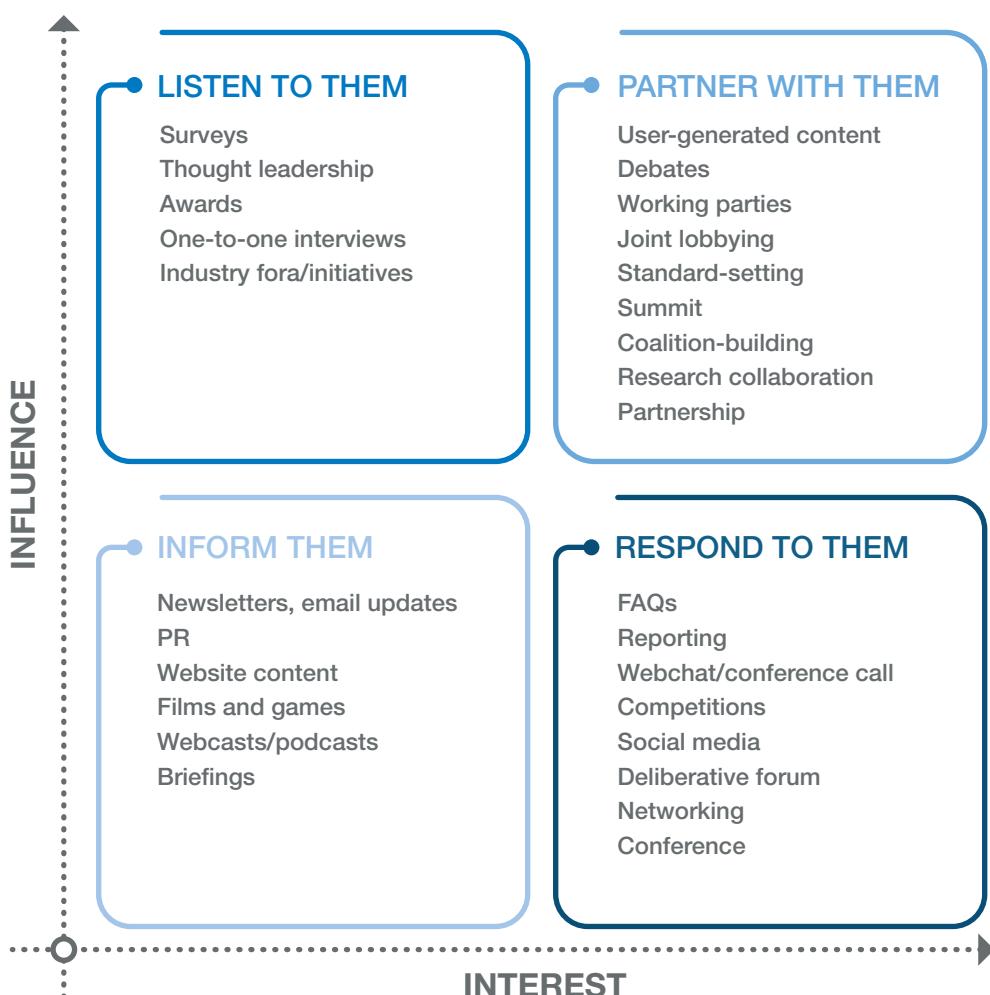
- How does sustainability fit into your wider external communications plans?
- Do you know who your external stakeholders are, what information they are interested in and when they would like it?
- How do you communicate sustainability information to key external stakeholders?
- What is your sustainability narrative? How does this fit with your significant (or ‘material’ issues)? What are your key sustainability messages and lines?
- Do you know or have relationships with key sustainability media/journalists?
- Who is authorised to speak to mainstream and trade press/media? Have they been appropriately trained?
- How do you receive and respond to external enquiries on sustainability matters? Are the right people informed or consulted internally?
- Do you have external communications lines prepared on key aspects of your programme – e.g. key targets and issues or where you do not necessarily have a firm policy stance?
- Do you consider sustainability angles to wider communications to ensure joined-up messaging – e.g. could a press release announce something that is at complete odds with your sustainability vision or strategy?
- Do you have processes in place to respond to potential negative press?



There are a number of communication mechanisms – ranging from use of websites, social media, newsletters and reports through to internal presentations, focus groups, public meetings, surveys or one-to-one meetings. Whichever you choose, your approach should always take stakeholder interests into account. Taking into consideration stakeholder interest

and influence, the framework below may help determine the best approach to engagement.

Sustainability is an incredibly complex subject to communicate. It may well be necessary to simplify messages and talk in a language people can relate to and understand.





## CLAIMS AND DECLARATIONS

In recent years there has been a surge in claims about the sustainability attributes of products or services. Claims cover a wide array of activities and take many forms:

- suggestive unspoilt landscapes or wildlife;
- direct claims in text (e.g. ‘this service is carbon neutral’ or ‘this is a zero emissions event’ or ‘100% recyclable’); or
- specially developed symbols and labels.

Such claims can be made in advertisements, direct marketing materials, on websites or directly on product packaging. Claims can be on a specific issue (e.g. ‘organic’) or about the characteristics of inputs (e.g. ‘PVC-free’). They might be third-party labels (e.g. FSC® certified or Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified) or industry or multi-stakeholder schemes (e.g. Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil or the Better Cotton Initiative). They might also be a strategic commitment from the company – to develop more sustainable products or to donate a percentage of profits to a worthy charitable cause, for instance.

The proliferation of claims and labels can be incredibly complicated and can result in a degree of uncertainty and confusion about which claims or labels to trust and how best to make an informed decision. For most criteria, labels or certifications exist which may provide you with additional guarantees on the sustainability credentials of the product or service. However, not all claims are equal, and the systems behind claims are diverse. For example, you can purchase coffee which is Rainforest Alliance certified, Fairtrade certified or organic certified – all these labels are essentially attempting to address different issues (or ‘hotspots’) in the value chain.

Some claims and labels may seem impressive but are in fact not addressing issues relevant to the product or service in question. Many may lack enough independent verification from reputable sources. A credible sustainability claim is clear, accurate and relevant, and can be backed up by systems that are transparent and robust. For example, if a supplier says their service has a 25% lower carbon footprint than their closest competitor, then they should be prepared to provide independent evidence to support such claims.

A sustainability-related claim that is vague or non-specific or which broadly implies that something is benign or beneficial should not be used. This includes making such claims as ‘environmentally safe’, ‘environmentally friendly’, ‘non-polluting’, and ‘socially responsible’ for example.

In summary, all sustainability claims and declarations must be legal, fair, honest and transparent and must be verifiable (i.e. they must not be misleading and able to be supported by relevant data that is subject to verification and from reputable sources). They also need to be sensitive to the views and needs of stakeholders. For example, products marketed as recyclable need to be able to be reclaimed for recycling via end users, rather than the claim being based on a technicality.

The use of third-party logos (e.g. FSC®) is likely to be strictly controlled so the necessary licenses and permissions must be obtained from the relevant certification or licensing body prior to use. For example, the FSC® requires organisations wishing to promote their use of FSC® certified finished products to have a trademark licence.



## DOCUMENTING INFORMATION

When you develop and implement a sustainability programme, a certain amount of documentation is necessary – but you don't need to record everything. The key is getting the balance right between appropriate documentation and other demonstrable actions.

A sustainability programme and supporting management system should not be bureaucratic and generate lots of paper! There is also little point generating information no one will read.

Instead, consider what's required to prove – if needed – that you have carried out your programme as planned, and document this information. This is particularly important if you are planning to implement ISO 20121 and then seek some form of endorsement that you meet its requirements (see Appendix C for further guidance).

Clear, accurate and precise documentation is also valuable when:

- something needs to be carried out in a common or consistent way; or
- you perform an activity so infrequently that people might struggle to remember how it was done before.

It is important to maintain records of performance as well as situations where things have gone wrong or near misses – particularly where they relate to your sustainability goals.

It is also advisable to summarise key elements of your programme and supporting management system in the form of a manual. This should provide an overview of your sustainability strategy and the systems in place

to underpin its delivery, for example how key ways of working have been influenced to consider sustainability matters. It should also provide signposting to related processes and documentation or indeed set out the arrangements where documentation does not formally exist elsewhere.

You will also need to consider the following questions:

- **Where to store documented information?**

For example, kept in paper form or electronically.

- **How to navigate the documented information?**

For example, will documents hyperlink to other information? This might be fine if it is only accessible internally but if shared externally (e.g. with suppliers), these links may not be accessible.

- **Whether information should be static or dynamic?**

For example, are monitoring and measurement results continuously updated and accessible via a database or manually recorded?

- **Whether information should be duplicated or not?**

For example, copies of documentation may exist elsewhere but may not easily accessible, so duplicates may need to be made (ideally avoid if possible).

If your organisation has a 'document control' system you should follow this – or create your own if it does not. This is so that it is clear to you and others which document is the latest version, when it was last updated, who reviewed and approved it and where it can be found. At the very least an official document needs to be clearly marked with a date and a version number.

## KEY ACTIONS

Basic Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some basic sustainability controls or interventions are in place in the business (e.g. sourcing processes for most high risk and 'quick win' contracts).</li><li>• Sustainability 'champions' have been identified and key individuals have received basic training in sustainability.</li><li>• Sustainability commitments and requirements are communicated internally and to relevant suppliers.</li><li>• The organisation's website expresses a general commitment to sustainability.</li><li>• Some sustainability-related documented information is maintained and easily accessible (e.g. Sustainability Policy).</li></ul>
Intermediate Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustainability controls or interventions are in place for all key organisational processes including sourcing of goods and services.</li><li>• Appropriate resources (staff and budget) are assigned to design and execute the sustainability programme.</li><li>• All individuals with sustainability responsibilities have received basic training in sustainability.</li><li>• Sustainability is included as part of employee induction programmes and in key recruitment competencies and selection criteria.</li><li>• Key sustainability messages and achievements are incorporated into ongoing communication channels with key stakeholders, such as the wider Olympic Family, press/media and civil society.</li><li>• The organisation's website outlines the organisation's sustainability vision, strategy and goals it has committed to achieve.</li><li>• Sustainability documented information has been prioritised, is maintained and easily accessible and a manual has been prepared which summarises the sustainability programme.</li></ul>
Advanced Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustainability is fully embedded in all relevant organisational processes.</li><li>• Appropriate resources are assigned to support evaluation, reporting, and continuous improvement processes.</li><li>• Reward and recognition is linked to achievement of sustainability objectives for key individuals.</li><li>• Top management communicates sustainability goals and strategies in communications with external stakeholders.</li><li>• The organisation's website includes information on its sustainability performance and steps have begun to be taken to engage suppliers/partners in collecting and disclosing sustainability information of interest to key stakeholders.</li><li>• A formal process exists for capturing and disseminating lessons learned within the organisation.</li><li>• All key sustainability documented information is maintained and easily accessible and a manual has been prepared which summarises the sustainability programme.</li></ul>



SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

REVIEWING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

# 5

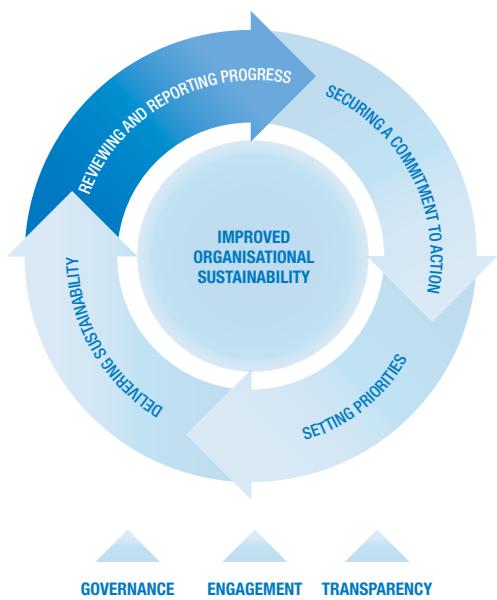
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## REVIEWING AND REPORTING PROGRESS





# REVIEWING AND REPORTING PROGRESS



## MAIN GOAL

To proactively monitor and measure sustainability impacts and progress towards the organisation's vision, strategy and goals.

## MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

Now is the time to consider how you will regularly monitor and measure key aspects of your sustainability programme (e.g. action on priority issues and objectives, targets and plans). You will also need to consider how you will communicate your efforts and achievements (see also previous chapter).

Identifying what needs to be measured including who, when and how is easier said than done. Data collection is often a very difficult area to get right and many organisations struggle with this.

Gathering information and data is a complicated task and a consistent challenge. Information and data are often held in numerous places, in a range of different formats, and by different teams that have their own priorities. Data may also not exist or are too costly to obtain.

Timelines for internal reporting and any external reporting may not align. It is also too easy to fall into the trap of asking for information and data without really knowing how you intend to use it – or even if you will use it.

Ideally, you will be able to identify and respond to things before they become issues. Consider:

- What do you need to monitor and measure within the boundaries of your sustainability programme? What data are appropriate?
- What data are relevant to your objectives and targets?
- What data do you need for ongoing engagement with stakeholders including your top management?
- How do problems or potential problems get reported, escalated and investigated? (see 'Corrective and preventive action' on page 51).
- Do you want/need to report internally or externally (and to whom?)

Reporting should not be underestimated and should be considered alongside developing any sustainability strategy and associated goals. Knowing what is required versus what is perhaps a 'nice-to-have' or not required at all will avoid a lot of wasted time and resources down the line.



## PUBLIC SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING

Drivers for improved accountability and transparency of organisations are increasing all the time. Public reporting is a good way for an organisation to communicate openly about its values, objectives and performance in relation to sustainability. Sustainability reporting is the practice of measuring, disclosing and being accountable to internal and external stakeholders.

Sustainability reporting is now standard practice for large and mid-cap companies around the world. The world's most widely used voluntary sustainability reporting standard is the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Standards. GRI has developed a set of core metrics and disclosures intended to be applicable to all organisations.

In 2012, GRI published a set of 'Event Organizers Sector Disclosures'. With recent the advent of the new GRI Standards the use of these 'Event Organizers Sector Disclosures' is recommended for event sector organisations using the GRI Standards, but it is not a mandatory requirement to prepare a report in accordance with the Standards.

With the advent of greater digitalisation, we have also started to see a shift to what's been termed 'always on' reporting where organisations keep their performance content continually updated.

Even if you are looking to establish an ambitious goal and it is not clear how you will measure it, then at least you have identified this up front and it can be included as part of a forward action programme. This is likely to be a challenge when attempting to measure more strategic-level goals.

It is advisable to develop a clear plan for your data collection needs which identifies roles and responsibilities, how and when data should be reported, and how data are managed. Any equipment required for gathering data should be fit for purpose and calibrated and maintained appropriately. At some point your data collection arrangements may be internally or externally audited.

Progress can and should of course be measured objectively. You should ideally be looking to feed into any internal reporting processes that exist within the organisation. This could be internal within the department or function or through wider governance reporting arrangements that exist (e.g. senior management committees).

Regardless, sustainability performance reports should be prepared on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly) with input from other relevant departments and functions. This should include consideration of:

- material or significant issues;
- risks and opportunities;
- adherence to legislation and other obligations;
- stakeholder concerns;
- progress towards any goals;
- results of any assurance activities (see below); and
- lessons learned and any recommended actions.

The above will help with any strategic review that is undertaken (see page 52) and can be used to input into wider internal and external reporting requirements.



## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ASSURANCE

Assurance can take many forms from independent audits of specific areas or independent verification of data through to internal audit activities sponsored by top management or reviews of supplier performance by contract managers.

Assurance can add value if correctly executed and help you understand if your programme and system is properly implemented or identify areas for improvement.

Assurance activities may well already be taking place in your organisation. You should be looking to insert sustainability requirements into these activities as much as possible, particularly where results are reported to top management. This will enable any gaps to be addressed by specific interventions you introduce.

One approach is to prepare an integrated programme to direct which areas of your management system should be looked at using

a range of assurance activities and approaches. It is not necessary to look at the entirety of your programme as part of one audit but over time you should seek to review all elements. All assurance activities should have clear objectives established. Timing of reviews; frequency of audits; role of the supply chain; roles and responsibilities; and how results will be communicated to top management are all things that need to be considered.

Individuals undertaking assurance activities should be objective, impartial and competent. This applies regardless of whether the individual is internal or external to the organisation.

Individuals or teams with sustainability responsibilities have a role to play in supporting assurance activities as they can provide a level of oversight as the programme gets implemented. Ideally more thorough reviews should be conducted by people who have not been directly involved in whatever is planned to be audited (e.g. a specific set of processes or controls). This approach should work for all sizes of organisations.

REPORTING SHOULD NOT BE  
UNDERESTIMATED AND SHOULD BE  
CONSIDERED ALONGSIDE DEVELOPING  
ANY SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY AND  
ASSOCIATED GOALS



## TYPES OF ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES

Assurance activities may be classified in many ways but here is a suggested approach:



system audits – analysis of management system elements classified according to:

- o organisational or central management arrangements; and
- o localised management arrangements;



department, functional or programme audits – analysis of sustainability elements specific to a department, team or programme (including workstreams) classified according to:

- o dedicated sustainability audits; and
- o multi-issue audits, which include sustainability matters;



subject audits – analysis of a specific element of sustainability (e.g. waste management, carbon, labour standards, etc);



direct supplier or contractor audits – audits of direct suppliers and contractors (these may be carried out internally or by third parties) and may be classified according to:

- o dedicated sustainability audits (e.g. environmental management and / health & safety audits of site contractors); and
- o multi-issue audits, which include sustainability matters;



extended supply chain audits – audits of production sites used by suppliers and which are deemed to be of significant risk to the reputation of the organisation (these may be carried out internally or by third parties); and



external assurance reviews such as:

- o specialist reviews undertaken by organisations that have an interest in an organisation but are technically independent of it;
- o reasonable or limited assurance engagements (e.g. information disclosed in external sustainability reports); and
- o independent third-party certification audits (e.g. third-party certification audits to check conformity against the requirements of ISO 20121).

NOTE: See Appendix C for more information of relevance to ISO 20121.



## CORRECTIVE AND PREVENTIVE ACTION

As your sustainability programme matures and evolves you should find yourself in a position where situations are being brought to your attention that may not be quite as they should be. Things are unlikely to ever be perfect or run as smoothly as you would like. There may be a range of reasons for this and could include:

- **individuals or teams** not knowing that they are responsible for doing something – or may know but are not competent for the task at hand;
- **process or part of a process is not being followed** – or may be followed by not actually working in practice;
- a **breach of legislation** has occurred or is occurring;
- a **previously unforeseen sustainability issue** has arisen and there no arrangements to manage it;
- contractual requirements are not being met by **suppliers**; or
- sustainability goals are **not on track** to be met.

These anomalies can be identified through a variety of means, such as ongoing assurance activities including supplier audits, internal reporting arrangements including your own performance reviews, concerns raised by stakeholders, lessons learned, or indeed by individuals or teams who raise issues directly.

Ideally you should have a process to manage and track the resolution of these anomalies and the goal should be to tackle the root cause. For example, is the issue isolated or likely to reoccur? You should be seeking to identify why the anomaly has occurred in the first place and prevent it from reoccurring in the future.

Try to also identify lessons learned, i.e. what works and what doesn't – and use this to improve the planning and delivery of future activities and events.

IDENTIFY LESSONS LEARNED AND USE THIS TO IMPROVE THE PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS



## STRATEGIC REVIEW

It is important to take stock periodically with your top management and check how the overall sustainability programme and supporting management system has performed. This will look at what you've achieved, identify if there are any lessons learned and decide what needs to be done to improve effectiveness.

Whilst any performance reviews or audits (see above) will have determined whether arrangements are being followed, the purpose of a strategic review is to determine whether the programme and system meets the needs of your organisation and is helping your organisation improve its sustainability performance. Ultimately you should be looking to evaluate your current and target sustainability maturity.

You should look to prepare a summary of key issues and topics of concern and any initial recommendations for improving aspects of your programme ahead of time. This should then be presented and discussed with key individuals and top management.

To support this review, you might typically include:

- stakeholder issues and concerns;
- performance against your objectives and goals;
- problems or potential problems identified (and associated lessons learned); and
- any recommendations for improvement.

Examples of an improvement opportunity might include additional resources to support delivery, amending goals, or even creating new processes.

TAKE STOCK PERIODICALLY WITH YOUR  
TOP MANAGEMENT AND CHECK HOW  
THE OVERALL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME  
AND SUPPORTING MANAGEMENT  
SYSTEM HAS PERFORMED



Evaluating strategic outcomes is an area that is still very much evolving and there is no set way of doing it. Given the multi-faceted nature of sustainability it is unlikely any one measure will deliver success in terms of monitoring and review of overall performance. However, a basic maturity model, such as the example in Appendix A, can assist in determining the level of sustainability maturity in each area. This is

because it is considered more realistic to see the organisation as more developed in some areas and less so in others. The matrix is meant to encourage ongoing learning, exploration and evolution.

Some organisations carry out this review annually, but you may want to do it more frequently (e.g. every six months).

## KEY ACTIONS

Basic Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic monitoring and measurement arrangements are in place. A review of sustainability efforts and performance takes place at least once a year and is communicated to top management.</li></ul>
Intermediate Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrangements are in place to monitor, measure and audit progress against key systems and goals and the organisation's sustainability strategy and performance is formally reviewed at least once a year with top management.</li></ul>
Advanced Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehensive arrangements are in place to monitor, measure and audit progress against all relevant systems and goals and the organisation's sustainability strategy and performance is formally reviewed at least every 6 months with top management, with input from key external stakeholders.</li></ul>



SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

ENABLING SUSTAINABILITY

# 6

## ENABLING SUSTAINABILITY



# ENABLING SUSTAINABILITY



## MAIN GOAL

To ensure key cross-cutting enabling factors (governance, engagement and transparency) are appropriately leveraged to support the organisation's ability to progress sustainability.

## RATIONALE

This Guide has focused on the practical aspects of establishing and implementing an effective sustainability programme. This highlights the importance of top management commitment and an effective management systems approach to integrating sustainability into your organisation's ways of working.

However, drawing on learnings from early adopters of more sustainable business practices, it has become clear that over time that there are a small number of 'enablers' that cut across every step and would make progressing sustainability in an organisation

much more effective and efficient. These may be summarised as governance, engagement and transparency.

This will require some honest reflection on where your organisation is on its journey. For example, is there complete alignment between top management, where the organisation is trying to get to with regards to its sustainability vision and those that are tasked with delivering it?

## GOVERNANCE

Effective 'governance' is absolutely critical to progressing sustainability – that is the system by which an organisation is directed, controlled and held accountable to achieve its core purpose over the long term.

The key factor to consider in the case of governance is whether there are the right checks and balances in place to enable sustainability to be progressed. This can often be overlooked by organisations looking to adopt more sustainable practices.

Effective governance enables the exploitation of opportunities and the mitigation of risk, and ensures that appropriate persons and teams are accountable for decisions, according to the organisation's nature and level of maturity. Good governance also provides an environment in which innovation is encouraged and investment is well managed.

Sustainability needs to ultimately be fully embedded across your organisation, cutting across any silos and entrenched thinking, organisational structures and hierarchies, with key business activities aligned with strategic



sustainability priorities. Your organisation's prevailing culture and management and governance structures will either help or hinder your efforts.

One of the biggest challenges is not just bridging the gap between a vision/strategy and action. It is to do so in a way that begins to embed sustainability more securely throughout your organisation. Being a little more formalised and systematic in determining what needs to be done to integrate into and supplement existing ways of working will help to embed sustainability more securely, even more so if it is done in keeping with your organisational culture.

For example, you need to be clear who is accountable for ensuring that sustainability is factored into key parts of the organisation. There also needs to be a route within the organisation for raising issues where things do not quite go to plan, or a conflict has arisen, and a business decision needs to be made. Ideally, there needs to be an executive-level committee to oversee and coordinate the development and implementation of sustainability.

There are several questions you may wish to reflect on as you look at the culture, management and governance of your organisation:

- Do you have the right **culture and values** in place in your organisation to deliver your sustainability vision and strategy?
- Is there an **appropriate level of governance** in place in terms of processes, lines of accountability, resources and reporting?
- Have you fully defined **roles and responsibilities** of relevance to sustainability?
- How will you **introduce your sustainability strategy** across the organisation: as a limited pilot project, in phases, or a complete package?
- Do your people have the necessary **knowledge, experience and motivation** to implement the sustainability strategy, or will you need specialist training support, or to recruit additional qualified staff?

This form of readiness checking will help you to determine roles and responsibilities, the resources and other forms of support you will need for implementing sustainability, with whom you will need to engage and communicate and how best to introduce the new approach.

## EFFECTIVE 'GOVERNANCE' IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL TO PROGRESSING SUSTAINABILITY



## ENGAGEMENT

Environmental risks and social inequality are making the world more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Consumer values are shifting, and businesses need to work hard to be considered trustworthy and build community support. At the same time, resource constraints and environmental concerns continue to put pressure on supply chains and profitability. Businesses can no longer leave it to markets, governments or a relatively weak civil society to respond to these challenges. It is increasingly in your interests to take an urgent and proactive role in responding to these challenges.

Having said this, implementing sustainability represents major change. In most organisations, major change requires fundamental shifts in culture. Change often fails to get off the ground, stalls soon after commencement, or eventually collapses because the prevailing culture (beliefs, thinking and behaviour) of an organisation is incompatible with what the organisation is trying to achieve.

This was touched on in the opening 'Securing a Commitment to Action' chapter. Change management is however distinct but complementary to other management approaches – it is first and foremost about people. You should be seeking to focus on those aspects that are required to 'implement and sustain' the planned change, such as influencing individual behaviour and organisational culture, introducing new ways of working and capturing lessons learned for future change programmes.

You will need to continually reflect and evaluate your organisation's readiness, ability and capacity to progress sustainability. This should include an assessment of the change and impact that is anticipated to have on the organisation and its value chain.

Good communication is key to creating a positive effect on organisational culture and can make a significant contribution to the overall effectiveness of the change programme.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT IS DISTINCT  
BUT COMPLEMENTARY TO OTHER  
MANAGEMENT APPROACHES – IT IS FIRST  
AND FOREMOST ABOUT PEOPLE



You should also expect the unexpected because things will not always go to plan. You will need to decide how these situations should be managed particularly where responsibility to drive change has been devolved.

It is important to consider the timing of when the sustainability programme will be rolled out. It may also be worth introducing sustainability to only certain parts of the organisation before rolling out the entire programme. Start with easy or quick wins that will give you some initial traction internally and build relationships with your most engaged or strategically most important internal or external stakeholders. If you do start small, do consider scalability from the outset. Any action or activity should have the potential to be scaled up so that it can be applied to your day-to-day decisions and activities.

## TRANSPARENCY

Transparency should be encouraged, and information should be proactively shared internally with key business partners and where appropriate wider stakeholders. Your organisation should be prepared to be open about decisions and activities that affect its ability to adopt more sustainable practices.

Today's virtual world has put us in an era dominated by a need and demand for greater transparency. Technological innovations and changing consumer and social expectations mean that our standards of transparency need to evolve. You should seek to work with your stakeholders in an open, constructive and transparent manner – and expect them to do the same.

YOU SHOULD SEEK TO WORK WITH YOUR STAKEHOLDERS IN AN OPEN, CONSTRUCTIVE AND TRANSPARENT MANNER – AND EXPECT THEM TO DO THE SAME

Key questions to reflect on include:

- Is our culture sufficiently open and transparent to allow critical sustainability issues to be identified and escalated appropriately?
- Is our culture sufficiently open and transparent so that the senior leadership cascade information relevant to sustainability down to the appropriate individuals and teams?

Public disclosure of key sustainability information, including supply chain-related, is

fast becoming the norm. Because of sustained stakeholder pressure, many global brands also publish regular updates of the names and locations (i.e. site level) of all their first-tier manufacturing sites, and some have started to disclose sites below this (e.g. raw materials suppliers). In an Olympic context, this has been the subject of high-profile campaigns in the past, notably Beijing 2008 and London 2012. For their sponsorship of the Beijing Games, adidas disclosed the factories making products for Beijing 2008 and did the same for London 2012. LOCOG also published most of the factories used by its merchandise licensees in the lead up to the London 2012 Games.

## KEY ACTIONS

<b>Basic Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Steps have been taken to understand how governance for sustainability may be strengthened within the organisation.</li><li>• Information on key sustainability issues is understood but is not routinely shared internally or externally.</li></ul>
<b>Intermediate Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate governance is in place for sustainability and accountability for sustainability is formally assigned to a member of top management.</li><li>• Steps have been taken to evaluate and strengthen the organisation's readiness, ability and capacity to progress sustainability.</li><li>• Transparency relating to the organisation's sustainability journey is recognised by top management, but activity tends to remain passive or reactive rather than proactive.</li></ul>
<b>Advanced Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate governance is in place for sustainability, accountability for sustainability is formally assigned to a member of top management and an executive-level committee has been established for sustainability matters.</li><li>• Organisational readiness, ability and capacity to progress sustainability has continually improved over several years.</li><li>• The organisation can demonstrate that it is fully open and transparent on all key sustainability issues, its progress and challenges internally and externally.</li></ul>



# 7

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Guidance on Using a Sustainability Maturity Matrix

APPENDIX B: How this Guide Aligns to ISO 20121

APPENDIX C: Claiming Compliance Against ISO 20121

APPENDIX D: References and Guidance



## APPENDIX A    GUIDANCE ON USING A SUSTAINABILITY MATURITY MATRIX

As a holistic concept, sustainable development will require a range of measures to produce an overall picture of how an organisation is progressing with regard to sustainability. It is unlikely that any one measure will deliver success in terms of monitoring and review.

An organisation will not have advanced to the same level in all areas. It would be more realistic to see it as more developed in some areas and less in others. It is suggested that a maturity matrix approach is used to assess the level of maturity in each area. This appendix provides supplemental advice and guidance on developing and using a maturity matrix.

The aim of the maturity matrix is to provide a map or tool to find out where you are, to indicate ways forward and to show what progress has been made. This is a more ‘strategic’ approach to evaluation than other more ‘tactical’ approaches to monitoring and measurement.

A maturity matrix can be used throughout the process to define and redefine the organisations sustainability path and determine how engaged it is on the agenda. It will be necessary for you to populate the cells in a way is relevant to your organisation. The table suggests the sort of gradations or bandings envisaged and the sort of criteria that if passed suggest progression and higher levels of

‘maturity’ and engagement. The elements and levels shown are intended for guidance and illustration only; they are not exhaustive or fixed and as such can be adapted as required. For example, ISO 20121 suggests the inclusion of the organisation’s values and sustainability principles in the maturity matrix.

The term ‘maturity’ should not suggest that if you reach all the boxes in the right-hand column you have nothing further to do. Sustainable development is a continuous commitment. Your strategic goals will continually move as societal expectations continue to shift, technology changes, scientific understanding causes us to review limits, and so on. The matrix is meant to reflect that reality and encourage ongoing learning and evolution.

It is useful to involve a number of stakeholders with differing roles and responsibilities, seeking consensus on the most appropriate and meaningful practices and levels. Each level described in a cell of the maturity model should, as far as possible, be unambiguous, objective and show clearly demonstrable achievements.

The information in the maturity model can be analysed using a variety of tools, for example displaying it as a radar or spider chart could highlight the areas that need the most attention.



## EXAMPLE MATURITY MODEL FOR ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

ISSUE	REACTIVE	BASIC	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Leadership & Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No formal leadership commitment</li><li>• No sustainability programme in place</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership publishes commitment or statement on sustainability with objectives</li><li>• Basic sustainability programme in place</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehensive sustainability programme in place</li><li>• Leadership starts to set example</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustainability is regularly discussed at management meetings</li><li>• Organisation is an advocate for sustainability and seen as leading in sports sector</li></ul>
Prioritise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reactive approach to issues driven by regulatory, NGO, or wider stakeholder pressure</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compliance and risk management focus</li><li>• Steps taken to identify sustainability issues with longer term view beyond 'here and now'</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key sustainability issues identified and prioritised – with some stakeholder involvement</li><li>• Time-bound goals established for all key sustainability issues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key sustainability issues identified and clarified in collaboration with key stakeholders</li><li>• Outcome-based time-bound goals established for all key sustainability issues with input from key stakeholders</li></ul>
Deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimal effort – focussed on short-term problem solving only</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some staff assigned to manage aspects of sustainability as part of existing role</li><li>• Sustainability minimum requirements established for high-risk issues and 'quick wins' and acknowledged in key ways of working</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustainability requirements factored into all key ways of working and appropriate governance is in place</li><li>• Appropriate resources (staff and budget) are assigned to design and execute sustainability programme</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustainability fully embedded into the organisation</li><li>• Organisation participates in industry or multi-stakeholder collaborative initiatives that aim to drive more sustainable outcomes in the wider market or sports sector</li></ul>



ISSUE	REACTIVE	BASIC	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Measure & Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No or limited monitoring or measurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some ways of working in place to monitor and measure</li> <li>Outcomes not widely shared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some structural and planned ways of working for review in place</li> <li>Some learning informing decision making and policy/strategy development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate resources are assigned to support evaluation, reporting and continuous improvement – can demonstrate how review outcomes have been used to improve programme</li> <li>Sustainability programme is formally reviewed at least every six months with top management with input from key external stakeholders</li> </ul>
Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No or limited sustainability communication to the organisation internally or externally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal systems in place with limited access to information</li> <li>Sustainability communications and PR processes recognised but no clear strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance and relevance of sustainability recognised and key part of public information reporting and communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust, relevant and comprehensive sustainability communications and PR strategy – fully open and transparent on successes and challenges</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX B HOW THIS GUIDE ALIGNS TO ISO 20121

Following the steps outlined in this Guide will help you begin to embed sustainability within your organisation. If you follow the steps here, you should also find it much easier to meet the full requirements of ISO 20121.

The following tables outline what is required by the standard and highlights where some guidance is offered in this Guide. The standard implies that its requirements should be addressed in sequence. This is rarely the case because things will usually be done out of sequence, often concurrently with other things.

The tables have been broadly structured around the layout of this Guide. Consequently, the summary requirements are not necessarily in the same order as what is set out in the standard. It should be noted that the below is not a replacement for looking at the detail

of the clauses as laid out in the actual prevailing version of ISO 20121. It should also be noted that this Guide also goes beyond the explicit requirements of the standard.

Note: the following clauses have been excluded on the basis that in many respects they would be automatically met if all the other requirements of the standard are fully and correctly addressed:

- Clause 4.4 which requires the establishment, implementation, maintenance and continual improvement of a sustainability management system (SMS); and
- Clause 10.2 which requires the suitability, adequacy or effectiveness of the sustainability management system to be continually improved.



## SECURING A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

REQUIREMENT	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	COVERED AT LEAST IN BRIEF IN THIS GUIDE?
5.1 Leadership and commitment is demonstrated by top management and covers all clause requirements.	<p>Although there may be sustainability initiatives in place it does not mean that the organisation's leadership has entirely bought in.</p> <p>In some respects, the requirements of this clause will be met by implementing subsequent clauses. However, it is not sufficient to show support purely by comprehensive delegation of authorities and obligations. Top management and their senior leadership team will need to lead by example.</p>	Yes
5.3 Responsibilities and authorities for relevant roles have been assigned and communicated by top management.	<p>The organisation will need to establish a core team responsible for implementing and reporting on the performance of the Sustainability Management System (SMS). Individuals at all levels of the organisation (including contracted) will need to be involved to identify opportunities to drive the SMS forward.</p> <p>The roles and responsibilities of all those involved in implementing the SMS need to be outlined.</p>	Yes
4.1 External and internal issues of relevance to the organisation's purpose that could affect its ability to achieve intended SMS outcomes have been determined.	This is a context-setting clause. In many respects the requirements of this clause will be met by implementing subsequent clauses. However, this is really about taking the opportunity to undertake a high-level initial review before plunging into the detail (e.g. for instance, would a SMS conflict with the organisations business objectives?).	Yes
4.2 Interested parties relevant to the SMS and their requirements have been determined.	<p>Interested parties are stakeholders – those that can influence the organisation's sustainability performance or could be impacted by the organisation's activities.</p> <p>Stakeholders will often have a different perspective and help identify significant and emerging issues, offer feedback and input on issues, and support activities to improve sustainability performance.</p> <p>(Note: there is an additional 4.2 requirement which is covered under the 'Plan' section)</p>	Yes



REQUIREMENT	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	COVERED AT LEAST IN BRIEF IN THIS GUIDE?
4.3 The boundaries of the SMS have been determined and clearly documented.	This is about determining what is in and out of scope of the SMS. The SMS would generally include all event activities which are under control or significant influence of the organisation. However, it is possible to cover the whole of the organisation or exclude certain aspects where there is good and justifiable reason to do so.	Yes
4.5 Sustainable development governing principles in the form of a statement of purpose and values that relate specifically to events have been defined.	This is about providing a frame of reference for the development and implementation of the SMS and a set of sustainability values for the organisation's event operations. As a minimum the standard requires the following principles to be adopted: stewardship, inclusivity, integrity and transparency.	Partially
5.2 A sustainability policy has been established which covers all clause requirements.	A sustainability policy is a written 'statement of intent' and should outline the organisation's vision and is what should drive the whole of the SMS.  (Note: at this stage it might only be a draft policy that is produced which will need to be amended as a result of subsequent clauses and engagement and consultation with top management and other interested parties).	Yes
5.2 The sustainability policy is communicated within the organisation and other interested parties.	Once finalised, the policy is a governance document and should become a publicly available declaration of the organisation's intentions and commitment to improving its sustainability performance. In many ways it is a 'contract' made between the organisation and its stakeholders.	Yes



## SETTING SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES

REQUIREMENT	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	COVERED AT LEAST IN BRIEF IN THIS GUIDE?
4.2 A procedure for identifying and engaging with interested parties has been established, implemented and maintained.	The organisation will need to be able to clearly articulate how it identifies and engages with interested parties, how it groups stakeholders and how (where appropriate) the outputs from its engagement activities are captured and considered.	Yes
6.1.3 All legal and other requirements applicable to sustainability issues are known and implemented.	Compliance with the law is step one on the path towards improving your sustainability performance. Many sustainability issues the organisation will be looking to manage will have some form of legal baseline against which it should be looking to exceed in the majority of instances. The organisation may also have adopted and committed to comply with other requirements, such as corporate policies and standards or industry or other best-practice codes.	Yes
6.1.2 All sustainability issues have been identified and their significance has been evaluated.	Not all issues are necessarily relevant or have impacts of equal scale and scope. The organisation will need to prioritise sustainability issues in order to focus on those which are most important or significant.	Yes
6.2 Appropriate sustainability objectives and targets have been established at relevant functions and levels.	Objectives (i.e. what you will do to specifically meet an aim) and targets (i.e. outcomes(s) that need to be met in order to achieve a particular objective) can be an incredibly powerful engagement tool for top management, employees and wider stakeholders. Objectives and targets are a great way to focus attention and create a shared ambition for everyone to buy into and work towards. They help people understand what sustainability means and more importantly how it applies to their organisation or role.	Yes
6.1.1 Plans are in place to a) address sustainability risks and opportunities, b) integrate and implement these actions as part of SMS processes and c) evaluate their effectiveness.	This is a catch-all clause. If steps are not taken to properly embed the SMS into the organisation's processes (or 'ways of working') any actions taken to improve sustainability performance will be done in a vacuum and their effectiveness will be severely diminished.  (Note: contextual and stakeholder issues identified as part of meeting the requirements of 4.1 and 4.2 should be considered at this stage in addition to ensuring the advancement of governing sustainable development principles (4.5). This also links to later operational clauses 8.1–8.3).	Yes



## DELIVERING SUSTAINABILITY

REQUIREMENT	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	COVERED AT LEAST IN BRIEF IN THIS GUIDE?
8.3 The relevance of sustainability objectives, targets and plans to individual suppliers has been determined.	<p>The organisation will have a significant impact through its procurement decisions and the actions of its suppliers. It will be necessary to determine how the supply chain is able to support the implementation of the SMS.</p> <p>(Note: it might also be prudent to require several key suppliers to implement ISO 20121 in their own right. This is likely to make it even easier for the organisation to meet its own objectives and targets).</p>	Yes
8.1 Processes are in place to implement and control actions to address sustainability risks and opportunities.	This requires appropriate measures or interventions to be taken, either internally or by suppliers, to ensure that the organisation meets its policy commitments, complies with legal and other requirements, achieves its objectives and targets and manages its significant sustainability issues.	Yes
8.2 Processes are in place to deal with modified activities, products, services, or changing circumstances.	Any changes to activities, products or services, either internally or those which belong to suppliers, must trigger a review and if necessary appropriate measures must be taken to ensure that the organisation's sustainability policy or objectives and targets are not compromised.	Yes
7.1 Resources have been determined and provided.	<p>Whilst roles and responsibilities for specific tasks should have been agreed by this stage (or at least be in the process of being agreed) – individuals may not necessarily have everything they need.</p> <p>To achieve their objectives and targets the organisation will need to allocate adequate resources, including staff, training, infrastructure, technology and finance.</p>	Yes
7.2 People doing work of relevance to sustainability which is under the organisation's control are competent.	All relevant staff, including suppliers, must be appropriately trained to enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities of relevance to the SMS. As roles and circumstances change there will be a need to continually review and update training programmes and to make sure all staff are kept up to date.	Yes
7.3 People doing work of relevance to sustainability which is under the organisation's control are aware of the sustainability policy, their role in delivering sustainability goals and the consequences of not acting.	All those working for or on behalf of the organisation will need to be aware of what its policy is on sustainability, what its aims and ambitions are, where relevant what is expected of them in terms of contribution, and so on.	Yes



REQUIREMENT	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	COVERED AT LEAST IN BRIEF IN THIS GUIDE?
7.4 Internal and external communication needs have been determined and implemented.	Getting the message out effectively and developing a sustainability dialogue with all stakeholders – internal or external – is crucial. It will be important to raise and maintain awareness of the organisation's sustainability programme, promote its achievements and generate positive media coverage, as well as to be well-positioned to receive and respond to enquiries, concerns or other stakeholder feedback including potential negative media issues.	Yes
7.5 Information is documented in accordance with the requirements of the standard.	It is important that records are clearly and effectively maintained to ensure an appropriate level of transparency and support any subsequent internal audit and certification activities. Not everything needs to be documented. However, some things will need to be and it is about getting the balance right between having appropriate documentation and other demonstrable actions. It is also generally advisable to summarise SMS arrangements in the form of a manual.	Yes



## REVIEWING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

REQUIREMENT	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	COVERED AT LEAST IN BRIEF IN THIS GUIDE?
9.2 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation needs have been determined and implemented.	<p>It is important to put appropriate arrangements in place to regularly monitor and measure the key areas that affect delivery of the organisation's sustainability policy and objectives and targets and take action in the event of a nonconformity as well as identifying lessons learned.</p>	Yes
10.1 Processes are in place and action is taken where nonconformities are identified.	<p>A nonconformity is where the SMS fails or where a planned action did not achieve its desired outcome. Nonconformities must be highlighted and assessed, and the best course of action must be implemented – ideally to prevent their reoccurrence. The entire process must be documented.</p>	Yes
9.3 Internal audits are regularly conducted which meet the requirements of the standard.	<p>If correctly executed, internal audits should add a lot of value, help determine whether the SMS is working and is properly implemented and/or identify improvement opportunities. There are a variety of ways of meeting the requirements of this part of the standard and it can be approached in a smart and pragmatic way. Neither does all parts of the SMS need to be looked at during a particular audit.</p>	Yes
9.1 Current and target performance against governing principles has been established.	<p>Sustainability is a holistic concept which requires business strategies to be adopted which meet the current needs of the organisation and its stakeholders while sustaining the resources, both human and natural, which will be needed in the future. A range of measures is necessary to produce to get a reasonable picture of these factors and how the SMS is performing in relation to an organisation's governing principles (see 4.5). Although several sustainability goals may have been achieved by implementing the SMS, strategically the organisation will also need to be able to demonstrate how their overall sustainability performance has improved. ISO 20121 suggests that a maturity matrix approach is used to evaluate performance - however organisations are free to come up with alternative approaches.</p>	Partially



REQUIREMENT	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	COVERED AT LEAST IN BRIEF IN THIS GUIDE?
9.4 Top management reviews the SMS at planned intervals.	<p>You need to be able to take a step back and review the SMS to ensure it is suitable, adequate and effective and to assess how the organisation's sustainability performance is improving. The previous clauses of this phase all serve as inputs into the requirements of this part of the standard.</p> <p>Top management need to receive a full briefing in addition to normal internal reporting channels. This 'management review' is arguably the most important part of the SMS and should be undertaken on a periodic basis. Many organisations undertake this type of review on an annual basis (to varying levels of success). It is considered that half-yearly is a more appropriate period. Any changes in situation or scope must be documented and accounted for.</p>	Yes



## APPENDIX C CLAIMING COMPLIANCE AGAINST ISO 20121

If you have made a public commitment to follow ISO 20121, then it will need to be upheld through demonstrable actions.

There are three ways in which an organisation can demonstrate that it meets the requirements of ISO 20121:

- **first party** (self-determination and self-declaration by the organisation seeking compliance);
- **second party** (confirmation of conformance by parties having an interest in the organisation, such as a customer, supplier, parent organisation, or trade association); or
- an independent **third party**.

Organisations can only claim compliance with respect to those activities that they are accountable for and that are within the scope of their management system. Where this relates specifically to an event, any organisations with overall accountability for the event can claim that it has been planned and managed in accordance with ISO 20121. For instance, a sports organisation may run a lot of events each year but only wants its flagship events to be ISO 20121 compliant. In this instance it would appoint a team within its organisation to develop a management system compliant within ISO 20121 for these flagship events. It is likely that as they create the management system they will start changing their way of working on all events, as opposed to working in two different ways. This approach

has been a significant route to market for this standard. Although clearly extending the scope to cover all event activities will be beneficial to the wider organisation in the long run.

In all cases it is about gathering evidence to verify that the system is in place and operating effectively. This often involves following 'audit trails' as well as 'testing' the system. However, a management system is as much about what people do as the documented evidence that it amasses.

Events can present challenges when attempting to make observations of the management system in action because they may be one-off occasions rather than ongoing activities. This may require some degree of verification during the event to observe the organisation operating its management system in the field. One of the issues here is that an event by its nature is an intense and often stressful activity and there is little time for accommodating such verification. This will always be a problem when making observations in the field. Nevertheless, with good planning these problems can be overcome, and any credible verifiers should understand how to observe on-site without impacting on the delivery of the event.

Evidence for meeting the requirements of the standard may come in three forms:



<b>Descriptive</b>	Activities or actions taken to meet the requirements of a particular clause of the standard can be described. Refer to the section on documenting information.
<b>Supportive</b>	What additional evidence can be provided to support the descriptive evidence set out above (e.g. plans, reports, records, etc)? Not everything needs to be documented – the right balance needs to be found between having appropriate documentation and other demonstrable actions.
<b>Observed</b>	Evidence that can be gained on site during the event – through observation and gleaned from talking to key workforce representatives.

Where organisations have started out on the process of implementing ISO 20121 but are not yet in full compliance, a claim may be made if it does not overstate the organisation's position. Through making such claims public the organisation should be prepared to provide evidence if required. For example, if an organisation claims that it is taking steps towards implementing ISO 20121 it would

be reasonable to expect them to indicate when they expect to be in full compliance. It would also be reasonable to expect the company to show evidence of the work done so far, for example their Sustainability Policy. Following the steps outlined in the 'Securing a Commitment to Action' chapter will also help to legitimise such claims if asked.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VERIFICATION, CERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION?

Verification, certification and accreditation are often used interchangeably but actually have different meanings. It is particularly important to understand the difference for judging the credibility of claims made by suppliers/partners.

- Verification is a general term used for the process of evaluating whether or not something complies with/meets a set of requirements (which might be internally or externally set). There is no set approach to this and it may be done by a client, a supplier/partner or indeed an independent third party or wider stakeholder.
- Certification is essentially a written assurance of the conformity of a process, product or service to a pre-determined scope and set of requirements laid out in a standard. Generally, this is done by an independent third party – although first-party (self) and second-party (stakeholder) certification is also possible in some instances (e.g. ISO standards).
- Accreditation is the formal recognition by an authoritative body of the competence of an individual or organisation to work to specified standards.

In effect, certification is the third-party endorsement of an organisation's processes, products or services, while accreditation is an independent third-party endorsement of the certification itself.

For example, while it is possible to be certified to ISO 14001 (the international environmental management system standard) it is not possible to be accredited to ISO 14001. An accredited certification body can however be appointed to certify the organisation to ISO 14001.



In wishing to claim compliance against the requirements of ISO 20121, it should ultimately be a matter for the organisation and its top management to decide which route they go down, if any.

This section provides a summary of the three primary routes open to organisations and an indication of some of the pros and cons that exist.

### Self-declaration

In self-certification the individual or organisation providing the good or service offers its stakeholders some degree of assurance as to claims being made. At its simplest, self-certification is a statement from the organisation that it complies with the requirements of the standard.

If you claim to meet the requirements of the standard, then you must be able to provide evidence if needed. An example of this might be a signed letter from top management on headed paper confirming that their organisation is in full compliance together with an indication of the measures that have been taken. You must also be prepared to be audited by a stakeholder (e.g. a sponsor) should the need arise (see ‘Second-party inspection’ below).

Whilst self-certification may be appropriate for small organisations and offers the advantage of being relatively inexpensive, it does come with several disadvantages. For example, the organisation should ensure that the individuals used to check conformity are competent and have been relatively divorced from implementing the system. There is also the

question of how credible this route may appear to some stakeholders – particularly given the increasingly transparent world we now live in.

### Second-party inspection

Confirmation of conformance is provided by parties having an interest in the organisation, such as a customer, supplier, parent organisation, or trade association. It is a route that has been common in several industries (e.g. automotive) and is an interesting one to consider in the context of ISO 20121.

For example, a big private or public-sector organisation sponsoring an event will almost certainly have internal audit capability as well as access to internal sustainability expertise. With the right training such organisations may be able to undertake second-party inspections of an event or an event organiser. Similarly, an event organiser may wish to audit a venue or one of its suppliers who are making self-certification claims of conformance. A trade association could even develop a scheme and offer an inspection service to its members.

Second-party inspection offers a low-cost route to demonstrating compliance with the standard and may also offer further business-to-business opportunities. Disadvantages include variable credibility (it very much depends on how competent the individuals are who carry out the review); other customers may want to conduct their own additional reviews of your system (although this risk may be limited if you have been recently reviewed by a high-profile organisation) which in turn may cause difficulties for smaller organisations.



### Third-party certification

Third-party certification involves the independent evaluation of a claim by expert unbiased sources. The key benefit is that it provides stakeholders with more confidence that the management system meets ISO 20121 requirements.

Theoretically it should eliminate multiple audits, but in reality, with other standards this has not always been the case. In theory there are two routes:

- independent assessment by a competent third party (unaccredited certification); or
- independent assessment by a nationally accredited certification body.

At this point it is important to distinguish between accreditation and certification as there is no such thing as a third-party accredited management system. Accreditation is the basis by which an authoritative body, such as the Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS), gives formal recognition that a body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks. Accreditation forms the third-party assessment that ensures that an organisation providing certification services is in conformance with internationally recognised standards.

It is understood that there are steps being taken by some accreditation bodies (e.g. the UK Accreditation Service – UKAS) to develop an accreditation scheme for ISO 20121 certification.

Third party certification needs to be undertaken by competent auditors who have a thorough understanding of the concept of sustainability, considerable insight into the structure, content and intent of ISO 20121 and knowledge of the events industry.

Very few certifiers have this sort of competency. The greatest concern lies in the lack of understanding about the concept of sustainability. This is often taken to mean 'environment' and both event organisers and certifiers tend to focus on environmental initiatives and management systems. Furthermore, in many ways ISO 20121 prescribes a business management system.

This presents a challenge to the industry because organisations need to select certifiers who have the right skills and competencies. To ensure value is obtained from the certification process, the credentials of the certifiers that are conducting the assessment need to be checked.

In time we may see accreditation of certifiers, but in the meantime, certification bodies should at least be following the competency requirements of ISO/IEC 17021. This includes the complementary part 4 standard which specifies additional competence requirements for personnel involved in the audit and certification process for event sustainability management systems.

Certification brings many benefits to the events industry. If the certifiers are competent it also need not come at a significant cost. A good certifier should be able to ensure that event organisations are extracting all the value out of ISO 20121, rather than simply paying lip-service to it. Certification also enables organisations to differentiate themselves in the marketplace by demonstrating that an organisation is committed to improving the sustainability of its operations. There are a growing number of sports organisations around the world that have either been third-party certified to ISO 20121 or have embarked on the process of certification.



## APPENDIX D REFERENCES AND GUIDANCE

The following selected further resources are not exhaustive, but they may provide helpful reference material when using this guide. Please note that external links were correct at the time of writing and that the IOC is not responsible for the content of these external websites and does not necessarily endorse the website or the site's owners.

### USEFUL GUIDES AND TOOLS

- BSI, [Sustainable Events Guide – Developing a sustainability management system for events: A stepping-stone to BS ISO 20121;](#)
- BSI, [Executive Briefing: BS 8001 – a Guide: The world's first standard for implementing the principles of the circular economy in organizations;](#)
- BS 8001:2017, [Framework for implementing the principles of the circular economy in organizations – Guide;](#)
- BS 8900-1:2013, [Managing sustainable development of organizations – Guide;](#)
- Global Reporting Initiative, [Event Organizers Sector Disclosures;](#)
- ISO 20121:2012, [Event sustainability management systems – Requirements with guidance for use;](#)
- ISO 20400:2017, [Sustainable procurement – Guidance;](#)
- Legal & General and Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility, [Business Critical: Understanding a Company's Current and Desired Stages of Corporate Responsibility Maturity;](#)
- OECD, [OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises;](#)
- Stakeholder Research Associates & UNEP, [From Words to Action: The Stakeholder Engagement Manual, Volume 1 The Guide to Practitioners' Perspectives on Stakeholder Engagement;](#)
- UNEP & AccountAbility, [From Words to Action: The Stakeholder Engagement Manual, Volume 2, The Practitioner's Handbook on Stakeholder Engagement;](#)
- UN, [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;](#)
- UN, [Guide to Corporate Sustainability – UN Global Compact;](#) and
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development, [People Matter Reward: Linking sustainability to pay.](#)

### USEFUL LINKS

- The Events Industry Council Principles for Sustainable Events were developed by representatives of global events, tourism and sustainability bodies to guide and motivate event organisers worldwide to embrace and implement more sustainable event practices. View the principles at <https://events council.org/Sustainability/Sustainability-Pledge> for more information.



- The Future-Fit Business Benchmark is a free business tool designed to guide real progress toward a flourishing future – and make the UN Sustainable Development Goals a reality. View the framework at <https://futurefitbusiness.org/> for more information.
- The GRI Standards are the first global standards for sustainability reporting. They feature a modular, interrelated structure, and represent the global best practice for reporting on a range of economic, environmental and social impacts. Visit the website at <https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/> for more information.
- Sustainable Purpose is a relatively new website seeking to provide information on how organisational ‘purpose’ and ‘sustainability’ need to increasingly go hand-in-hand. Visit the website at <https://www.sustainablepurpose.com/> for more information.
- The Sustainability Consortium is a global organisation working with the consumer goods industry to deliver more sustainable consumer products. They have developed the ProductFinder online platform which includes free sustainability insights on a wide range of consumer goods products. Visit the website at <https://www.sustainabilityconsortium.org/product-sustainability/productfinder/> for more information.
- SustainAbility carries out a review of key sustainability trends each year. Visit the website at <https://trends.sustainability.com/> for more information.
- The GRI, the UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) have developed the SDG Compass which aims to support companies of all sizes in aligning their strategies with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Visit the website <https://sdgcompass.org> for more information.
- The World Economic Forum’s Strategic Intelligence platform provides access to the latest research and analysis, videos, podcasts and interactive data from the world’s leading research institutions on over 120 topics – many sustainability-related. Visit the website <https://intelligence.weforum.org/> for more information (requires registration).